

BEADLE'S HALF DIME Library

Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office.

Copyright 1891, by BEADLE AND ADAMS.

May 26, 1891.

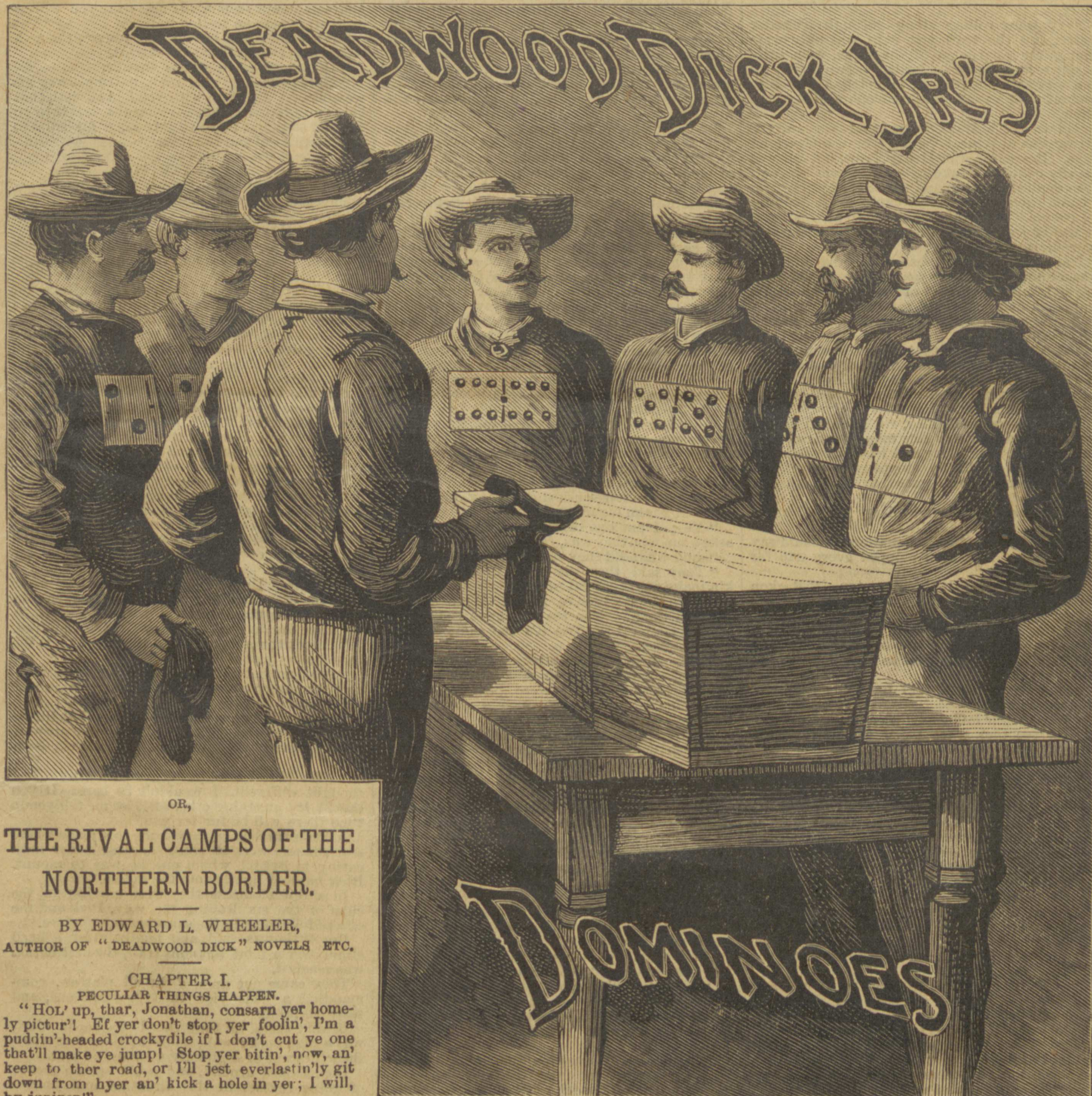
No. 722.

\$2.50
a Year.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS.
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

Vol. XXVIII.



OR,
**THE RIVAL CAMPS OF THE
NORTHERN BORDER.**

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS ETC.

CHAPTER I.

PECULIAR THINGS HAPPEN.

"Hol' up, thar, Jonathan, consarn yer home-ly pictur'! Ef yer don't stop yer foolin', I'm a puddin'-headed crockydile if I don't cut ye one that'll make ye jump! Stop yer bitin', now, an' keep to thor road, or I'll jest everlastin'ly git down from hyer an' kick a hole in yer; I will, by juniper!"

And with the words the Jebu gave the refrac-

DICK LOOKED FROM FACE TO FACE TO SEE WHAT MANNER OF MEN HIS FELLOW DOMINOES WERE.

tory off leader a jerk with no gentle hand, and the animal was quickly brought into orderly subjection.

"Ef thar's anything I hate," the driver then observed, "it's ter have a critter what's forever needin' ter be yauped at for somethin' or other; an' that's what's ther matter with Jonathan Q. McGinty thar. Ef he ain't a-bitin', he's a-shyin' off at somethin' no sensible critter would notice, an' I have more trouble with him than with ther hull rest of 'em tergether; I do, by juniper!"

"I have noticed that he seems to give you a good deal of trouble," remarked a passenger who was seated beside the driver on the box. "I would put him behind, and give him a trial at the wheels."

"Durn me ef I don't think that would be a good idee," the driver thoughtfully rejoined. "Reckon I'll try et on, an' see how it'll work fer a change. D'ye hear that, Jonathan Q.?"

"It was only a thought that came to me," the passenger observed, "and it may not do any good; but no harm to try it."

"That's so, an' I'll fix ther ornery beast; I will, by juniper!"

The "Jehu" was one "Yankum" Titus, who handled the ribbons on the weekly stage between Junction City and the important camp of Red Shirt.

They were rolling along through Thunder Gulch, and the trail, just here, was only wide enough for the passage of the stage, with little to spare, and the off leader had been cutting up in a way that threatened to bring a hub into contact with a projecting rock on oneside or the other.

"It was a 'hearse' of the usual type, and the driver was a typical 'Jehu' of the Overland days. His name was Henry Titus, but he was usually called 'Yankum,' a nickname that had been applied to him, and which meant, in full, 'yank them;' shorter 'yank 'em,' shortest 'yankum.' And that was derived from a habit he had of jerking hard upon the leaders whenever one was disorderly.

The passenger who shared the driver's seat was a man under thirty years of age, a good-looking and well built fellow of medium height. He had black hair, eyes and mustache, was plainly clad, and looked not unlike an ordinary man of business.

And yet there was that about him, notwithstanding, that raised him above the ordinary. Was it in his keen, flashing eyes? As we take a second look at him, there is something about him that seems familiar.

The stage was well filled, with several on top besides the driver and this man just described, and was rumbling along at a leisurely pace.

"Wonder ef I'll be stopped ter-day?" the driver presently interrogated, as if speaking to himself.

"Why, have you been held up lately?" asked the young man.

"Held up!" was the exclamation; "should say I had been. I've been stopped every trip fer four weeks past."

"Thunder!" cried those on top. "Reckon we'd better begin ter eat our wallys fer safe keepin'."

A game of cards had been in progress, but it was stopped abruptly, and each man began to feel for whatever valuables he happened to have about his person.

The driver, at this, laid back his head and laughed heartily.

"What is yer laffin' at?" was demanded.

"Ter see ther scare I gev yer," was the answer.

"Then yer didn't mean et, hey?"

"Yas, I mean'd et fast enough," the driver assured, "but thar ain't no danger. These fellers what stops me ain't no robbers."

"What do they stop you for then?" inquired the young man on the box.

"That's ther queer part of et, an' I have a notion I'm goin' ter see fun one o' these days."

"Tell us all about them, if you don't mind."

"I'll do that, sartain. Et ain't much ter tell, but et ar' a queer case. Somethin' new in my way, or leastways et was when I seen 'em fu'st time."

"Who are they? What sort of persons do you refer to?"

"Thar's six of 'em, an' they're all masked. Bet yer life I stopped suddent ther fu'st time they ordered my hands up. But I'll tell yer how et war. Look out thar, Jonathan!"

The off leader had showed a sign of biting again, but a quick jerk brought the animal to an attention to business, and then when the driver had disposed of an old quid and taken a new chew of tobacco, he told his story.

"Et was four weeks ago ter-day that I was

held up fu'st time," he began. "I was all alone on top that day, an' was ridin' along thinkin' about nothin' in p'tic'lar an' a good deal in gen'ral when all of a suddent a feller sings out 'Hands up!' An' I tell yer et war a shock, fer I thort et must be ther outlaw band what's been raisin' the devil 'round hyer of late."

"Then there is an outlaw band here, eh?" the young man questioned.

"Bet yer life thar is! He hasn't appeared on this trail yet, though; I mean ther chief."

"Well, go on with your story."

"Et war about a mile ahead from hyer, whar I was stopped. I looked up mighty suddent, 'bout as suddent as I yanked up on ther strings, an' thar blockin' ther way was six masked fellers. Yer see, I looked fer nothin' less than ter git a bullet plugged inter me ef I didn't stop mighty suddent, but when I looked second time durn me if ary one of 'em had a weepin' in band. Et was ther biggest s'prise I'd ever had in my life, I b'lieve."

"Then they didn't mean harm to you and your passengers, eh?"

"Nary time—or not that time, anyhow. I don't know how et's goin' ter be when they gits their man."

"When they get their man? What do you mean by that?"

"I'm comin' ter that now. When I'd got stopped, an' Jonathan Q. had stopped his prancin' an' stayed in his skin, then I asked what was wanted. An' then ther head man of ther gang told me they didn't mean no harm, but merely wanted ter inquire if a sartain man was aboard."

"What's his name?" says I.

"Deadwood Dick ar' his handle," says he.

"Well, yer is welcome ter see ef he ar' aboard," says I, "but I don't opine he ar', not this trip."

"With that, then, ther feller calls out to ther insiders ter know ef ary one of 'em answered ter that handle, an' bein' told that nary one of 'em did, he went off, an' his men with him, sayin' he would meet me next trip. An' sure enough, next trip he was on hand, askin' fer ther same feller, and two times more after that; an' I reckon we'll see 'em ergain ter-day. So, ef ary one of you galoots answers ter that odd name, ye had better be lookin' out, that's all."

A grim smile was playing about the mouth of the young man on the box with the driver.

"Well, I hope they will favor you again," he observed, quietly. "It will be something to break the monotony of the long ride."

"An' I don't reckon they'll disapp'int ye," the driver responded, "fer they was out last trip, an' et war rainin' like sin that day. They means biz, an' I wouldn't want ter be in ther boots of that feller when they gits him."

"Have you never asked them any questions?" the young man inquired.

"Yes; I put one or two at 'em last trip. I asked 'em who they was, fer one thing."

"And what did they say to that?"

"They said they was ther Lost Six, if yer kin make anything out of that."

"And I don't believe I can. What else did you ask them? You see you have roused my curiosity, and I suppose it's the same with the rest, hey?"

This was said to the others on top, and they all responded that such was the case; and several more questions were put, the driver answering, and in that manner a considerable time was passed.

They were still talking about the matter, when, suddenly, at a point where the gulch broadened and diverging branches led off in different directions, six masked men blocked the way.

One of the six stood out a little in advance of the others, holding up his hand as a signal to stop.

"Whoop!" cried Yankum Titus, drawing hard on the reins and clapping on the break, "whoop! Hyer we is ergain, strangers! Stop your prancin' now, Jonathan Q., or I'll most everlastin'ly git down thar to yer; an' ef I do, you bet thar'll be a time around hyar. What's ther word, strangers?"

"We are here to meet that man again," the foremost stated. "Is he with you this trip?"

"Wull, I don't know," the driver drawled. "Yer is welcome ter ask an' find out."

"Which I will do. Gentlemen, does any one of you answer to the name of Deadwood Dick?"

The moment the question was put, a brace of revolvers sprung into the hands of the young man who shared the driver's seat, and he covered the masked six.

"Yes," he answered; "that is the initial I

wear on my collar, friends; what is wanted of me?"

"Ha! you are Deadwood Dick, are you? I guess you will do, judging by the way you handle the poppers. We want you to leave the stage at this point, and go with us to your destination."

"Who are you, and what do you know about my destination?" Dick asked—for he it was.

"We are the men who sent you that letter two months ago, asking you to come up here. We received your answer that you would come, and we have been expecting you for weeks. Now we are ready to explain further what is wanted, but you must go with us to our place, for this is no child's play."

"And what if I don't go?" asked Dick.

"In that case we shall have to take you by force."

Deadwood Dick laughed.

"I fail to see how you will manage that, with the drop I have on you," he remarked.

"Turn your head and you will see," was the quiet response.

"And give you a chance to reverse the order of things, eh? Turn the tables on me as it were. No, not any. And what if I do go?"

"In that case our scheme will be laid before you, and you can then elect for yourself whether you will accept or not. If not, then you will be at liberty to go on to Red Shirt."

"But what proof have I that you are the men who wrote to me?" Dick demanded.

"Domino!" was the brief answer.

"That's enough," said Dick, putting away his weapons. "I will go with you." And with that he sprang to the ground, telling the driver to go on, and stepping forward, extended his hand to the foremost of the Lost Six.

CHAPTER II.

A SURPRISING PROPOSAL MADE.

THE pair grasped hands in friendly greeting. "Do yer mean what yer says?" asked the driver, gathering up the lines.

"Yes, I mean what I said," Deadwood Dick assured. "Go on without me. I go with these men."

"All right," agreed the driver, "an' et's yer own funeral, I opine. But, all ther same, I wouldn't want ter be in yer boots."

"Don't feel worried about me," Dick reassured, laughing. "I am able to take care of myself, I guess. But these men are all right, and intend me no harm."

"Wull, I hope they don't, that's all. They calls themselves ther Lost Six, none ther less, an' I'm afeerd there'll be a lost seven, afore you is done with 'em. Git up, thar, Jonathan Q."

With that command and a crack of the whip, the stage started on its way, leaving Dick in the company of the masked men, and the passengers looked back at the little group until the stage had passed out of sight.

"Now," spoke the leader of the six men, "let us go," and with that he turned abruptly and entered one of the diverging branches of the canyon.

Deadwood Dick followed immediately after him, the other five bringing up the rear, the six still wearing their masks.

"How far do we have to go?" Dick inquired.

"About three miles," was the answer. "We have horses just ahead here."

"And may I ask the reason for this unexpected manner of reception you have favored me with?"

"We prefer to say nothing about that till we have reached our destination," was the answer. "Be assured that we mean you well, however."

"All right; I take your word for that. If I thought different, I wouldn't be here. If you should try anything otherwise, let me tell you in time there will be fun for you."

A little further on they came to a place where seven horses were standing, and the leader indicating to Bristol which one he was to mount, Dick vaulted lightly into the saddle.

In a few moments they were moving on, the chief of the six leading the way, Dick and the others following in the same order as before.

But little was said, and finally, after a hard climb over a most tortuous trail, the destination was reached.

They came out upon a broad plateau, commanding a wide view in two directions, and there stopped.

Behind them, as they faced the open view, was a high rocky wall, while at their feet was a sheer descent of seemingly a thousand feet.

Dick looked around, and could see no means of going further in this direction, and judged that this plateau must be the end of the journey. But in that he was not quite correct.

"What do you think of this, Deadwood Dick?" the leader asked.

"It commands a good view, certainly," was the response.

"You are right in saying that. And it looks as if we had come to the end of the trail, don't it?"

"I must admit that it does," responded Dick. "As you raise the point, however, I suppose I am mistaken. How is it?"

"That is it. We go a little further. Before we proceed, however, let me point out to you the camp of Red Shirt. We shall probably have much to do with that camp in the near future."

"I think I see it now," Dick made answer, and he pointed away at a collection of buildings just discernible between two rocky walls quite a distance off. "Is that the place? I do not see any other, and I suppose it must be."

"Yes, that is the place. With a glass it can be seen plainly, and it is not impossible to signal between here and the camp. I mention this by the way. We may have occasion for such work."

After gazing for a few moments at the scene, the leader indicated that they would go on, and turned away from the ledge.

Dick followed, and was guided to the extreme right of the plateau, where he soon saw the secret.

There was a narrow ledge, just wide enough for a horse, which bent around a sharp corner of the rocky wall, and the trail went on from that point as before.

The chief of the six rode around this corner, Dick boldly following, and the others coming after them in turn; and the trail, now descending, was followed for some distance further.

Presently an opening appeared ahead, having the appearance of the entrance to a cavern, and that, as the leader intimated, marked their destination. They rode on and passed into this opening, and Dick recognized a large, well-lighted cavern.

The light came through a rift in the rocks, high up overhead, and gave the cavern a cheerful appearance.

"Well, here we are," the leader cried, and proceeded to dismount.

The others followed his example, and one of the number led his horse away to the left, the other animals following.

Deadwood Dick looked around him in something of astonishment. It was a place such as he had little expected to see. And it was unlike any he had ever seen before, in some respects, perhaps.

In the direction in which the horses had been taken was a rough stable, such as might be found out of doors in any camp. On the other side of the cavern was a big roomy-looking cabin, seeming out of place in such an unusual location.

"I see you are taking everything in," remarked the chief of the six. "Well, do so, and when you have done we will go into the house."

Dick announced that he had satisfied himself already, and followed in the direction of the cabin.

The leader unlocked the door, and they filed in.

Here they were in a large apartment, evidently the living room of the cabin.

"Make yourself at home here, Deadwood Dick," the chief now invited. "I and my comrades will step into this adjoining room, and will summon you into our presence when we are ready for you."

"All right; just as you please," Dick carelessly responded. "I am your guest of the hour, so do with me as you will, so long as you don't attempt harm."

"And you have my word that nothing of that sort is thought of. You will see presently that I have spoken the truth."

"I believe you. All the same, I am going to see that my weapons are in good order."

With the words, Dick drew his revolvers and examined them, while the others passed into another room.

"I'll be darned if this isn't a strange adventure," Dick mused, when alone. "I hardly know what to make of it. I suppose I'll know more before I am much older, however."

Having made sure that his weapons were all right and ready for business, he sat down on a stool with his back to the wall in such a way that it would be impossible for any one to surprise him from behind.

He had waited ten minutes, perhaps, during which time he had heard the men moving about in the adjoining room, when the door opened and

one of the six appeared and came forward to where Dick was seated.

The mask was still on the man's face, but in other respects his appearance was somewhat altered.

Now he wore a dark gray shirt, without coat, and on his breast was a white piece, perhaps of thick muslin, about six inches long by three in width.

This peculiar badge was divided by a red line through the center, and that was all, whatever it might mean.

Beyond this, the man wore a slouch hat of a common sort, with jean trousers and rough boots. At his waist was a belt containing a full assortment of weapons.

"The chief is now ready to see you, sir," he announced.

"All right!" agreed Dick, rising, "I'm ready to let him see me."

The man turned and went back into the inner room, Dick following.

As he entered, a strange sight met the gaze of the alert detective, and it was somewhat startling, too.

A table was before him in the middle of the room, and on that table rested a rude coffin. Around the table were seated the mysterious men of the black masks.

The one who had brought Dick in took his place at the table, near the foot. There were now three on each side, and the only vacant place was one at the head of the table.

All the men were clad alike, and on the breasts of the three on the opposite side of the table, the three facing Dick as he stood just within the door, were the same strange, oblong pieces of white, but remarkably different, too.

That upon the man nearest the head of the table and likewise nearest the head of the coffin, had the same red line down through the center, but on each end were five red spots arranged in the regular order of a quincunx: each spot about the size of a gold dollar.

On the next man was the same device, but differing in the number and arrangement of the spots. On each end of the rectangle of white were three red spots, ranged diagonally from corner to corner. On the last man on that side of the board appeared but two of the spots, one in the center on each end of the divided background of white. In short, Dick recognized instantly the double-five, double-tray and double-ace of dominoes.

For a moment no one spoke, until Dick had had time to take in the situation fully, and then he of the double-five said:

"Deadwood Dick, please take the vacant chair at the head of the board, and we will proceed to business."

"I am willing to oblige, sir," responded Dick, and he stepped forward to the seat indicated.

Laying his hand upon it, he took a swift glance at it to see that there was no trick about it, and sat down.

"I see you are a man of caution," remarked he of the double-five.

"It pays to be cautious."

"You are right. But you are no stranger to us by reputation, if you are in person. We have heard of you."

"As your letter to me proved. But, gentlemen, to what must I ascribe the honor of my reception here? What is the business of which you speak?"

"Have you noted the peculiar marks we wear on the front of our shirts?"

"Yes; I see you represent the doubles of a set of dominoes."

"So we do; but we lack a double-six, and the purpose of inviting you here is to urge you to accept that office."

"I assure you, gentlemen, that I am proud of the honor you would confer upon me," spoke Dick, "but before I answer I must know more about you. If you are honest men with honest designs, I may listen to your proposal with favor."

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN OF THE DOMINOES.

SOME weeks previous to the time of our story, Deadwood Dick had received a mysterious and peculiar letter.

It was one that had been following him for some time, and which finally had come into his hands a short time before his going to San Francisco from the Territory.

From a place somewhere in the northwestern part of Montana, it purported to be from the chief of a People's Vigilance Committee, and urged Dick to come to their aid in running down a band of outlaws.

This outlaw band, the letter went on to say,

was holding that part of the country in a terrorized condition, and so far had defied all efforts made to capture them or drive them out. Having heard of Deadwood Dick, the Committee wanted to get his help in the matter.

Dick, ever ready for adventure that promised to be a campaign against evil-doers, had readily accepted, promising to put in an appearance as soon as other engagements would permit. He was to come to the camp of Red Shirt, where he would find some one ready to meet him, and the signal of recognition agreed upon was the word "domino."

With this brief explanation let us proceed.

Dick's remarks were greeted with favor, and he of the double-five responded:

"We are honest men, Deadwood Dick, and our designs are honorable. And now I will give you the explanation which you demand."

"To begin with, then, let me inform you that here, within a few miles of each other, are two rival camps. One is the camp of Red Shirt, which you have seen from a distance, and the other is a camp called Gray Shirt, some miles further on. We, as you may judge by the color of our shirts, belong to the latter place."

"About these two camps is this one peculiar feature: All the citizens of either wear shirts of the one color. At Red Shirt, no gray article of that name is allowed; at Gray Shirt, the wearing of red is prohibited. And these rules admit of no exception. When a stranger arrives at either place, he must declare his intentions at once. If he is going to make a stay of more than two days, he must don the color of the camp."

"There is a good deal about this, and our business with you, that you cannot grasp yet, but you will see clearer when I have explained further. Both of these camps have good mines, run by stock companies, and both paying well, but Red Shirt has by far the best run of luck. This band of robbers has paid but little attention to that camp, while ours has suffered right along. Scarcely a shipment can be got through in safety, owing to the outlaws, and we have come to the conclusion that Red Shirt knows more about that outlaw band than any one is aware of."

"Now we, good citizens of Gray Shirt, have made up our minds to sift the matter to the bottom, and get at the truth of it. As our letter told you, we have formed ourselves into a people's committee, with the determination of running this band to earth and freeing the country of them. We have made some attempts, but thus far without success, owing to the fact that none of us is qualified to play the role of captain of the company. And that is the position we ask you to assume. Now you have heard the main facts of the case, and what do you say to it? Will you join us, become our captain, and help us in ridding the country of these rascals?"

Dick's answer was prompt.

"If you have stated the case fairly," he said, "I will comply with your request. If you have deceived me, however, it will be the worse for you when I find it out."

"Have no fears on that score. We have acted fair and square with you, and we expect you to do the same by us. Now are you ready to take the oath of the Gray Shirts, and become one of our band—the leader of the Domino Doubles?"

"Yes," Dick responded, "I am ready."

"Very well. Men, stand up; and you, sir, lay your hand upon this coffin and repeat after me this oath of allegiance:

"I do hereby pledge my word of honor, and make this my sworn word, that I will prove true to the citizens of the camp of Gray Shirt in all things, and to the Domino Doubles in particular; and that I will use my best efforts to break up the band of outlaws known as the Montana Marauders, and bring their chief, Iron John, to fill this coffin upon which my hand rests."

Deadwood Dick repeated the sentences, word for word, until the man of the double-five insignia ended, when he added:

"And which, if all has been truthfully represented to me, is hereby pledged in the presence of these witnesses."

"Good enough!" exclaimed the speaker of the band. "And now, men, since our friend has been sworn in, let us unmask."

With that the man tore off his mask, the others doing the same.

Deadwood Dick looked from face to face with somewhat of curiosity to learn what manner of men his fellow-Dominoes were.

He of the double-five was a good-looking fellow, about twenty-five years old, with a keen face and sandy mustache. Dick decided at once

that he was a man not wanting in nerve or good character.

The others need not be described in particular, but as a whole Dick felt rather proud of the band of which he had been made captain.

"Now you see us for what we are," remarked the Double-Five.

"And I am favorably impressed," assured Dick.

"Thank you for that. We remained masked, because we did not want to make our identity known to you if you refused to join us."

"Which was all right enough. But now that I am one of you—"

"And our captain," one man broke in.

"Yes, our captain," echoed the Double-Five.

"Well, now that I am your captain," accepted Dick, "let us talk the situation over and arrange our plans. You will have to post me well, seeing that I am a stranger here."

"Which we will do immediately. But you are ready to don the uniform of the Domino Doubles? We have it here for you, and in order to be at home at Gray Shirt Camp you will have to wear the camp-color."

"Yes, let me have it," asserted Dick, "and I will don it immediately."

"It is well. Double-Blank, bring out the captain's rig, and when the exchange has been made, take good care of Mr. Bristol's clothes."

He of the double-blank bowed and went off, and turning to Dick, the Double-Five added:

"Double-Blank is our home guard, sir. He is stationed here, to take care of things in our absence, to see to our horses, and such work. While one of our band, he is the least of our number."

"I see," said Dick. "Your captain is your Double-Six, and the rank follows on down the scale."

"Exactly. I being Double-Five, am next in rank after yourself. Oh, we have the machine working finely, and all you have to do is to take hold and direct our movements."

Dick's outfit was speedily laid before him, and he lost no time in putting it on, handing his own clothes over to Double-Blank.

The rig proved a good fit, and when it was finally adjusted Dick looked worthy the post he held.

He had the same gray shirt, and similar rough hat, trousers and boots, and on his breast was the mark of his rank—the Double-Six.

"Well, do I come up to your expectations?" Dick smilingly asked.

"Fully," he was assured. "We have seen enough of you already to support the good opinion we had formed of you."

"I am glad you are not disappointed. But now one point before we go any further: If I am to be your captain, I must have the power as well as the name. You are bound to obey my orders, or, as we used to say at school, I won't play."

At this the men laughed.

"There need be no misunderstanding on that score," said Double-Five. "You are our captain, and we expect to obey your directions to the letter. Am I not right in saying this, fellow Dominoes?"

"You are!" was the ready answer.

"That is all I ask," said Dick. "And now to business. I must know more about these two camps. What can you tell me?"

"Perhaps there is more I should have told you when I was about it," Double-Five answered. "You may think it strange that we should have directed you to come to Red Shirt instead of to our own camp, but we didn't want it suspected that you were coming to our place. We met you, in disguise, and no one will know what you are doing. At Gray Shirt, of course, you will have an assumed name."

"I see. Then you think you have a spy in your camp, who carries news to the outlaws?"

"Yes, undoubtedly there is, and who takes news to Red Shirt as well. But who he is we have not been able to discover yet."

"There is no reason to doubt the integrity of any one of this band, is there? I mean of this band of Domino Doubles. I must put the matter right out bluntly."

"No, you need not doubt one of us," was the answer. "We know each other well, and have pledged ourselves to the task of running this outlaw band to earth, with you to lead us to that end."

"Have you tried sending a spy to Red Shirt?"

"No; have had no one to send. You see, all of our citizens, and especially the members of our little band, are too well known there."

"Then I suppose that role will fall to me. But, no matter; I will undertake it, if it is

necessary. But, Double-Five, may I inquire who you are?"

"Certainly; I am Walt Maybree, son of Joel Maybree, who is manager of the Last Chance Mine at Gray Shirt."

"Ha! is that so? Well, I guess I made no mistake in forming my estimate of you. And the rest of you, gentlemen? Let's become acquainted, if you don't object."

There was perfect willingness, since the Double-Five had revealed his identity so unhesitatingly.

"But these domino signals—do you wear them openly at your camp?"

"No. You will find that your shirt is double-breasted. Fold it the other way, and your badge is out of sight."

"And what about matters at Red Shirt? What can you tell me about that camp, that will be useful knowledge for me to have?"

"It is not easy to tell just what would be useful to you. A day at Gray Shirt will enable you to pick up more than we could tell you in two hours. The mine there, however, is called, as I have told you already, the Good Luck. It is managed by one Hogan Upworth."

"What is the feeling between him and your father? That is to say, what is the feeling between the two mines?"

"It is not by any means friendly. But here are complications which I will tell you more about later on. Hogan Upworth has a son, a fellow about my own age, who seems determined to wed my sister; while— But, more of this later."

"As you please. But, what now? Are we to go on to Gray Shirt?"

From that point an hour's talk followed, which ended in five of the Dominoes going away together, leaving Deadwood Dick at the rendezvous with Double-Blank.

Later on, Dick set out from the cavern alone, having been directed by Double-Blank, and headed for the camp of Gray Shirt, being in disguise. Plans of action had been laid, as far as it was possible to arrange.

CHAPTER IV.

ARRIVAL AT RED SHIRT.

In the mean time the stage, under the guiding hand of Yankum Titus, had come to its destination at Red Shirt.

There at the time the citizens were congregated in front of the one hotel of the camp, the "Bung-Hole," to do honor to the occasion.

Stage-day, at your wild camp in the mountains where it comes only once a week, and perhaps not even as often as that, is generally something of a holiday on a small scale.

"Whoop!" cried Yankum, as he drew up in front of the "Bung-Hole." "whoop! Stop yer durn foolishness thar, Jonathan Q. I or I'm a pizen duffer if I don't git at yer an' do yer up; I will, by juniper!"

"Hullo, Yankum!" called out the proprietor of the Bung-Hole, as he appeared in the doorway of his shebang. "Yer has got hyer again, has yer? What's ther best word o' news yer has ter offer this trip? Did yer see yer masked gang this time?"

"Did I? Wull, I opine ef yer had been along yer would 'a' thort so, by juniper! They was on hand, you bet; an' they got their man, too."

"Got their man, do yer say?"

"That's what I murmured."

"An' what happened ter him? Did they hang him?"

"Oh, no; nary! They used him well, fur ez I could see."

"But did they have ter take him by force? How wur et done, anyhow?"

"Wull, I reckon not. Durn me ef ther feller didn't have ther drop on 'em fore they could wink."

"Yer don't say so!"

"Wull I jest do."

"Then I takes et they didn't mean him no harm."

"That's what they said, an' ther feller went with 'em. Oh, they's quite sociable cusses."

By the time that brief dialogue ended the driver had dropped his lines and sprung down, and the passengers were getting out.

Among the latter was a young woman, wearing a short veil that partly hid her features from sight. She was shapely, neatly dressed, and active in manner.

None of the other passengers deserve especial mention, so dropping them without further comment we will for the moment follow the movements of this young woman and learn more about her.

For the first few seconds after getting out of

the stage, she stood and looked about wondering-ly.

Evidently she thought she had arrived in a wild and rugged corner of semi-civilization.

Addressing the driver, she voiced her complaint in these words:

"Did I not understand you to say there was a hotel at this place, sir? Will you kindly tell me where it is?"

"Bless yer heart, lady, in course I said so!" the driver responded. "Thar et ar', an' thar's ther 'prietor in ther door. Honest Jo, a lady ter see you."

"And do you call that thing a hotel?" the young woman exclaimed in a tone of disgust.

"It looks more like a pigpen, on my word. And such a name!" with a glance at the unique sign.

"It is worse than the name of the camp."

"I beg yer parding, lady, from ther bottom o' my boots I does," apologized the proprietor, coming forward, hat in hand, bowing. "Et ar' ther best we has ter offer though, as I 'sure ye. Had I knowed yer was comin' I would 'a' had ther windys washed an' ther floor sanded."

At this odd manner of apology the young lady had to smile.

"But is there no other place in your camp where I could get board and lodgings, sir?" she inquired.

"I don't reckon thar be ma'm," was the answer.

"Are there any women about your place, sir?"

"Only ther cook, an' she's blacker'n midnight."

The young woman bit her lip. It seemed evident that she had not calculated upon finding so primitive a settlement as this.

"I'll tell yer what, lady," spoke up Yankum, "an' that ar' this: If yer has got ther rocks ter ante, mebbysome galoot will give up his shanty to yer use."

"Ha! a happy thought!" exclaimed the lady. "Gentlemen," to the assembled crowd, "is there one among you who will hire his house to me for a week or so? I am willing to pay a fair price."

"Hyer's ther galoot what will do that aire same," cried a voice, and a man pushed his way to the front. "My stuck-up ain't much ter boast of in ther way o' beauty, but fer solid comfort et gits thar every time. Will yer take a look at it?"

The young woman was first taking a survey of the man.

He was a rough-looking customer, but rather cleanly in appearance.

"Yes, sir; I will go and look at your place," the young woman responded, "and if it will do we will see if we can come to terms regarding it."

"Kerreck! Foller right this way, ma'm, an' we'll be thar in ther shake of a lamb's tail."

With that the man moved off out of the crowd, the young woman following, and the crowd looking after them curiously.

"Wull, I ber durn!" ejaculated the proprietor of the Bung-Hole.

"Ain't she a daisy?" demanded the driver of the "hearse," in honest praise.

"That's what she ar'!" was echoed. "An' see ther lugs Garry Long ar' puttin' on, will yer?"

"S'pose he thinks he hev made a 'pression on ther dandy gal. Wull, he's got ther best cabin in Red Shirt, an' she'll most likely take et."

"Yas, that's so, an' you has lost a boarder, Honest Jo. But, no matter, fer Garry Long will make et right by stoppin' with ye himself, I reckon. But say, Yankum, who ar' ther lady?"

"Yer asks me too much," was the driver's answer to that. "I gives et up. I took her on at Junction City, whar she inquired about this hyar camp o' Red Shirt, an' was specially interested ter know about a hotel hyar; which I 'sured her ye had."

"An' that's all yer knows erbout her, hey? Wull, reckon she'll make her biz knowed when she gits ready. I'll bet she ar' a beauty, ter judge by ther leetle that kin be seen of her. But about them masked fellers, Yankum— What war et ye said ther name of that feller was?"

"They called him Deadwood Dick, an' that war ther name he answered to."

At mention of this name, a man on the low platform in front of the saloon bit his lips in a vexed way, and paid close attention to all that was said.

He was a dark man, of medium height, and one who was evidently used to the ways of the wild West. Like all the others present, he wore the red shirt peculiar to the camp.

His belt contained the usual weapons: a brace of revolvers and a knife. His hat was the

ordinary slouch pattern, his trousers dark, and his boots rather finer than the ordinary run, as Western boots go.

But more of him anon.

Garry Long, as he has been called, conducted the young woman to the cabin and threw open the door for her to inspect it.

A keen look around seemed to satisfy her, for she immediately asked his price per week, which, when mentioned, was readily agreed to and promptly paid.

"Thet aire ar' business, I allow," Garry observed, taking the money. "Now I will move right out an' have ther place cleaned fer ye a bit, an' by ther time yer has had yer grub yer kin move in."

"Very well, sir; it is so understood. But, where am I to get my dinner? I would not care to go into that horrid saloon."

"Why, ther Bung-Hole ar' all right, miss. Thar's not a galoot in ther camp as wouldn't fling down his hat fer ye ter wipe yer feet on, an' I'm bettin' on et. You go right thar, an' you'll be used white."

"Well, I suppose I shall have to. I will be back again in about an hour to take possession. By the way, do you know of a boy about the camp that I might get to carry water for me, chop wood, and do such like chores?"

"Yas, I opine I do. Thar's that lad o' Gil Hoyle's, Gilly, ther calls him; I think he'll jest fill ther bill. I'll send him ter see ye, ef yer says so. He ain't got all his buttons—which is ter say he ain't balanced quite right in ther head, but I reckon he'll do. He's a harmless cuss."

"All right," smiling; "send him to me, and perhaps he will answer my purpose. No doubt he will do quite well."

With that understanding the young woman turned away, and bent her steps in the direction of the "hotel."

By this time the stage had been taken around to the stables, and most of the crowd was assembled at the post-office, leaving the hotel comparatively deserted.

The post-office was a concern by itself, and the opening of the weekly "prize-package," as the mail was called, was an event in which everybody had an interest that no one denied.

The young woman still had on her veil, which covered nearly all her face, and as she passed the crowd at the post-office she was the target of all eyes. She seemed to have an especial fascination for the dark man of medium height, of whom mention has been made.

He was near the post-office, and looked at her keenly as she approached.

Suddenly a light of recognition gleamed in his eyes, and his face slightly paled.

He glanced about him quickly as if to see whether this was noticed, but was speedily satisfied.

With the rest of the crowd he gazed after her until she had disappeared within the saloon, when he gave his attention again to the post-office. But there was a frown upon his face.

This personage was Fred Upworth, son of Hogan Upworth, the present manager of the Good Luck Mine at Red Shirt. He was about thirty years of age, apparently, had a stern face and, as has been said before, was clearly no tenderfoot.

When the young woman entered the saloon, the crowd there lowered their voices, as perhaps a respectful acknowledgment of the presence of a lady in their midst; and she advanced to the bar, paying no attention to anything or anybody.

"I would like to have something to eat," she made known. "Mr. Long said I would find it here."

"An' he war right, ma'm," the landlord assured. "Drop yerself right at one o' them 'ar tables funder back, an' yer shall have whatever yer wants."

"Have you no dining-room?"

"We calls this our dinin'-room when we is eatin', ma'm."

"Will you not permit me to go back to your kitchen, then, where your cook can wait on me and supply my wants?"

"Wull, yas, yer kin do that ef yer wants ter. I've no 'bjections ter that plan ef et suits you. Go right on through by that door over thar."

With a slight bow the young lady passed through the door and disappeared, leaving those in the saloon to comment upon her as suited their fancy.

The door opened upon a small hall, and a few steps to the rear were others, one leading out of doors and the other into the kitchen. The one leading out was open, so there was no mistaking the right one. Opening it, the young woman

stepped into the domain of the Bung-Hole's colored cook, where instant recognition awaited her.

CHAPTER V.

SERVING TWO MASTERS.

THE moment the door opened, the colored cook glanced up from her work, and at sight of the young woman, almost dropped a pen she had in hand.

"Fo' lan' ob goodness!" she exclaimed in low tone, "ef et ain' Miss Lily! Chile, how yo' eber found yo' way heah?"

"Hush!" the young woman cautioned in whisper, putting her finger to her lips. "I want some dinner, Auntie," in louder tone, "and asked the privilege of coming here to eat it, as I did not like to sit down in the saloon."

"Which am quite right an' proper," the negress agreed. "I will gib you a dinner dat am fit fo' a king, an' dat I done tol' yer. You sot right down dar, missy, an' yo' see ef I don' do what I say. Golly," in low tone, "but I's pow'ful glad ter see you."

She had now set down the pan, and looking about to see that no one was there to observe, took the girl's hands into her own great black ones, pressing them fondly.

The pressure was hastily given in return, and then the young woman withdrew her hands, saying:

"There, Dinah, be careful! We must not be seen at this. I am a stranger to you, you know."

"Yes, yes, chile; but I couldn't help it, jest dat onces. Will you hab some ob dis heah bear fo' yo' dinner?" in louder tone again.

"Yes, anything you have," was the response.

"I am as hungry as one myself. Wait on me," this in lower tone again, "and we will talk as we find opportunity while I am eating."

"All right, chile. Now dah yo' is, wid de bestest dinner I could git up fo' yo' if I done try a week. Pitch right in, now, chile, an' fill yo' self so full yo' 'most bu'st. Yo' mus' be hongry after dat stage ride."

So the big negress talked, as she arranged things on a little side-table for her pretending stranger guest, and so they both continued talking aloud, at odd moments, all the time the young woman was there. But it is with their talk in undertone that we have interest.

"I received your letter, Dinah," the young woman whispered, "and set out at once. Are you sure you are not mistaken?"

"Be I shua ob it, chile? Why, I could sw'ar to et, if I done had to. Course I is shua, else I wouldn't ob sent fo' ye' ter come heah, would I? I reckons not, I does."

"And does he know you?"

"Nary time!"

"Is he here now?"

"Yes; see'd him not a hour ago."

"But you haven't spoken to him about the matter?"

"No; I would be no good fo' dat work. Yo' is de one to do dat part ob it."

"Yes, I suppose so."

"An' you wants look out fo' him, chile, fo' he is a bad man."

"We are well aware of that. Bad as he is, though, I do not fear him, and I will have revenge for— But will you point him out to me?"

"Bet yo' sweet life I will, honey, soon's he shows his nose 'round dis way. I has it in fo' him, an' you bet dah is gwine be a day ob reck'nin' fo' long dat will jis' make his hair curl."

"What manner of looking man is he, Dinah?"

"Well, chile, he is lookish, I 'low. He am dark, an' about de middle ob highness, I should say."

"I believe I have seen him already, Dinah."

"Hit am mos' like yo' has, chile."

"I believe he was at the post-office when I came along."

"Dat war him, yo' kin bet. Whut am yo' pine ob him, ef it war de right one?"

"I believe he is a man to be feared."

"Right yo' is."

"But we fear him not, and revenge must now soon be ours."

This, while quoted together, was really a whispered exchange of words now and again at odd intervals.

And in the same manner the young woman told her old friend, as the colored woman clearly was, all about her arrangements concerning the cabin.

The young woman spent as long a time as she dared in the kitchen of the saloon, not wishing to arouse any suspicion, though that was not likely; and finally took her leave.

Passing again into the saloon, she paid for

the dinner and went out and over to her hired cabin.

There she found a pale, weak-eyed youth sitting on the doorstep, whittling away at a stick as though life depended on it.

"Are you Gilly?" she asked.

The lad sprang up with a start, and answered:

"Y—y—yes 'um; this hyar is me."

"And where is Mr. Long?"

"Garry Long?"

"Yes, I believe that's his name."

"Oh, he has gone off. Said the cabin was all right."

"And did he tell you that I wanted to hire you to wait on me and do my errands?"

"Yes'um; he told me. Did he tell you yer will have ter wear a red shirt?"

The young woman gazed at her questioner in blank amazement, half-pityingly, for a moment, and then she smiled.

She had been told that the lad was not altogether right, mentally, and this peculiar remark she took as proof of it.

"No; he did not tell me anything of that sort," she replied.

"Well, most likely ye will."

"Oh, I guess not; I am not a man, you know, Gilly. But, why do you make so odd a remark as that?"

"Cause et ar' so," was the earnest response.

"Don't ye know this ar' Red Shirt? An' don't every man wear a red shirt?"

"That is certainly so, come to think of it. But then, a woman couldn't be expected to dress like a man, you know. Now let's see about our new home—rather my new home."

"But yer will, though," the youth persisted.

"All the wimmen hyer—tha' ain't many—wears 'em. You'll be waited on by ther 'mittee, if yer is goin' ter stay hyer longer'n two days."

"Oh, well; let them come," the young woman ended the discussion. "Who are the women of the camp, Gilly?"

"Tha' ain't many, as I said," was the reply.

"Tha's Missus Upworth an' her darter Tilly, an' a woman what's servant to 'em. Then tha's Tim Googin's wife, what does washin'; an' Patsey Doyle's gal, an' ther nigger woman at ther hotel. Them's all of 'em, I guess."

"Then there are not many of them, that's true. But where do the Upworths live?"

"Over by ther mine! See that biggest shanty?"

"Yes, I see it."

"That's it."

By this time the young woman had made up her mind that if not altogether as bright as he might be, Gilly Hoyle was not quite a fool, and by some careful questioning she managed to learn a good deal about the camp of Red Shirt and the inhabitants thereof.

The main drift of her questionings seemed to be in the direction of the Upworth family, as though her interest centered there. But she was careful not to let any words drop which even a smarter person than Gilly Hoyle might be able to use as a cipher key to her business.

She was not long in finding some work for the lad, and he tried to prove his worth by doing his tasks quickly and well.

Finally he was not wanted any longer for the time being, and was told to go, with the understanding that he was to come and make himself useful every morning and evening.

Gilly went off whistling, and rattling some change with a merry jingle, evidently feeling himself a man of riches for the once.

He was hurrying in the direction of his father's shanty, when he was stopped by Fred Upworth.

"Hello, Gilly!" that gentleman saluted.

"What makes you so happy?"

The youth exhibited his money.

"Here's ther first pannin'," he said, "an' there's more where it comes from. I've got a snap."

"I should think so! They tell me you are working for the pretty lady who came by the stage. You are the best man in Red Shirt!"

The youth giggled, as though this tickled him immensely.

"Yes, that's what I am!" he declared.

"Garry Long put me up to et, an' when I went to see ther lady she gaged me right off. An' ther work she wants don't 'mount ter nothin', 'most."

"Why, you'll soon be rich, I should say, if the lady stops here long. How long is she going to stay?"

"Don't know."

"Haven't found that out yet, eh? Well, what is the lady's name?"

"Don't know."

"Pshaw! Do you mean to tell me you don't

know the name of your employer? I ought to boot you. You are not as smart as I thought you were."

This last remark seemed to hurt the youth more than the booting would have done, even if vigorously applied.

"But I'm goin' ter find out," he apologized.

"See here, Gilly," drawing nearer and speaking confidentially, "how would you like to earn a little more money?"

"Bully! You jest show me how ter do et, an' see ef I don't."

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do: For every quarter this lady gives you, I'll give you a half, if you'll do what I want you to do."

"I'll do that, you bet!"

They were standing between two shanties, and well out of sight from the cabin of Garry Long's.

"But you mustn't let anybody know this, Gilly."

"I won't, you bet."

"And particularly not the lady."

"All right! I onderstand that, Mister Upworth."

"And I'll tell you what I want to know. I want to find out what her name is, and what brings her here."

"I'll ask her, but I don't b'lieve she'll tell me onless she wants ter," was the innocent response to that.

"Dast it!" cried Upworth, impatiently, "don't be such a fool as to ask her anything. I couldn't trust you for that. But, keep your ears open, and you'll hear it all, sooner or later. Perhaps she has some friend here who will drop in to see her. If so, you can listen. And I want to know who her callers are. Now do you understand?"

"Oh, yes, you bet! I'll keep my ears and eyes open, an' say nothin' ter nobody. An' whatever I gits hold on, I'll tell it to yer. Yer kin trust Gilly fer that, an' he'll show yer whether he ain't a man or not."

"That's right. Only be careful not to let the lady suspect. It is for her good, you know. You must do your work well for her, Gilly."

CHAPTER VI.

A STRANGER'S UNIQUE PROPOSAL.

GRAY SHIRT was a better place than Red Shirt, every way.

As a whole, it had a better class of citizens, and more of the gentle sex.

Its buildings were superior, and its hotel was new, had not been opened long, and was the pride of the camp.

The "Hotel Royal," it was called, and was owned by the mining company. The proprietor was one Hardiman Snooks, an adept in his line.

Such a high sounding name for a hotel was not in harmony with the name of the camp, but it was a step toward better things in the way of cognomens generally.

An effort had been made to change the name of the camp, at the time when the hotel was formally opened, but the effort had resulted in a failure. The old residents were too strong for the new element.

The feeling against the camp of Red Shirt was too strong, and there must be some means of holding a mark of distinction the one from the other. It was argued that the citizens could cling to their gray shirts just the same, even though the camp were called Excelsior—the name proposed.

But this was not heeded. No amount of argument would alter the minds of the majority, so the name remained. The only time when Gray Shirt had ever made a concession to Red Shirt, was once when Gray Shirt had run out of liquid lightning and had to humble itself to beg a supply from the rival camp, paying about ten times its market cost.

This would not have been so bad, of itself, but that same supply of liquid exhilaration was found to have been "doctored," and the citizens of Gray Shirt, almost to a man, were made about as sick as mortals can be and not die outright. This was too much, and the one circumstance that might have been made the beginning of friendly relations between the two camps, was made the cause of bitter and undying enmity.

The white-winged goddess of Peace, to be poetical for the nonce, was hovering over this camp of Gray Shirt one afternoon—the afternoon of this same day of which the previous chapters treat, and everything about the place was quiet and orderly, when a lone horseman rode leisurely into the town.

Drawing rein at the piazza of the Hotel Royal, he slid out of the saddle with a lazy, sleepy air,

threw the rein over a post, and shambled up the steps and into the bar-room.

There was nothing particularly striking about this man, he was an ordinary specimen of the human family in nearly all respects.

If he had any marked peculiarity, it was this evident trait of chronic laziness in his make-up.

His every move was with the same sleepy air, as if he had been born tired.

He wore, too, a solemn air, as though he might be a preacher, but his raiment was not altogether suited to that character. He wore a rough slouch hat, a pair of as rough boots, while the section between was clad in a mixture of odds and ends of "store" clothes.

His age was not easily determined, but might have been guessed as forty. He had a chin whisker, and a pair of common spectacles spanned his nose.

He was of medium height, and his coat being too big for him, made him look a good deal smaller than he really was.

Entering the bar-room, he looked sleepily around, and shuffled to the bar.

"Any chance for grub and lodging here?" he lazily drawled.

"If you have got the spondulics," was the reply.

"And I have," the stranger assured.

"Then we can fix you out, sir."

It was not the proprietor behind the bar, but his clerk, whose name was Bob Dickens.

He was a rather fancy young man of twenty-four or so, wearing a "biled" shirt with a blazing diamond on the front.

There was nothing about him that deserves especial mention, unless it was the air of importance he carried with him, together with the airs he assumed.

Flirting the hotel Register around with a flourish, he invited the prospective guest to affix his name, at the same time dipping a pen and handing it over for that purpose.

The new-comer took the pen, and, leaning over the book wearily, lazily inscribed his name in the proper place.

"There it is," he drawled, as he surrendered the pen. "It's rather a tiresome name to write, being so long."

The clerk twirled the ledger around facing himself again, and read:

"SIGISMUND SOPHOCLES STIFF."

"Whew!" he whistled softly. "It isn't very short, that's a fact. You've slopped clear over the space with it. Why don't you sign yourself simply 'S. S. Stiff'?"

The new arrival sighed wearily.

"If I did that," he explained, "I would have to tell people what my name is in full, and life is too short and uncertain to spend time so idly. Still, I don't see but that it's about as broad as it's long."

"Why, how is that?"

"Why, if I escape questions on one hand by one dodge, I open the door for as many more in some other direction. At my last stop I simply put myself down as 'S. S. S.' on the Register, and I thought I would die under the questions it brought down upon me and here, when I write each name out in full, it begins to be as bad the other way. I almost wish I had been born a Chinaman."

"Born a Chinaman! What good would that do you?"

"Why, I could have a short name, something like 'Ho Ko,' for instance, and nobody would ever think of asking me what it means. But please don't make me talk any more now, for I'm tired. Will you see to my horse out there, and have him cared for? I'll sit down for a few minutes and rest up."

"Yes, sit down, for you look tired. We'll see to your horse."

Mr. Stiff shuffled to a chair, laid down a little bundle he had carried under his arm, and stretched out for a few minutes' quiet ease.

There were several in the room at the time, and among others a young man of twenty-five or thereabouts, rather good-looking, with keen face and sandy mustache—But we have seen him before. It was Walt Maybree.

He sauntered idly to the bar, some moments after the stranger had sat down, and looked at the name that had caused the clerk to whistle upon reading it.

"How's that for a handle?" Bob Dickens asked in undertone.

"It's a heavy one, no mistake," was the smiling response.

"No wonder he looks weary, eh?"

"Carrying such a heavy load on his conscience, eh?"

Both had a quiet laugh, and Maybree moved

away, taking a seat on the other side of the room.

The stranger rested for a little while, several more entering the room while he was enjoying it, but presently he rose and shuffled again to the bar.

"Young man," he spoke, with as much drawl as before, and loud enough for all to hear, "have you an undertaker in this growing town?"

"Why, do you think you are going to die?" the clerk counterquestioned, with a wink at Maybree.

"No, I'm too tired to die," was the solemn response. "What I am coming at is this: I am an undertaker myself, and I am looking for a promising place to locate."

This drawled statement raised a laugh at once.

"I don't think there is much demand for men of your calling here," the clerk made answer. "Our citizens don't die often, and when one does keel over he is generally planted with his boots on. You would starve to death if you depended on the business for a living."

"But I can vary my usefulness as occasion requires," Mr. Stiff drawled. "I am an excellent hangman, a first-rate butcher, and have been something of a doctor, too. But I have given up the latter profession."

"Why, how was that?"

"I found it too dangerous. I was called one night to doctor a sick man, at the place where I lived last, and he died before morning. The man's brother was with him when he died. Next he had occasion to call an undertaker, and I responded, carrying a coffin with me."

Laughter all around made the man stop till he could again be heard.

"Well," he resumed, "when I went in, and put down the coffin, that brother looked at me in a way that made me feel chilly. 'Are you doctor and undertaker both?' he demanded. 'Yes,' said I. And that's all that was said. He jerked a knife out of his boot and came for me, and I—Well, I moved out."

"And that's the reason you don't practice medicine any more, eh?"

"Yes; the two callings don't seem to work well together—that is, where one person tries to carry on both at once. But I am useful at other things besides these mentioned. If you think there's an opening for a live man here, I'll stay and open a shop anyhow, and trust to luck. Perhaps when you citizens see what a neat coffin I can turn out at short notice, you will begin to patronize me."

"What else are you handy at?" the clerk asked, evidently to lead the stranger to say more.

"I am a Jack at all trades," was the drawled answer. "But there is none that I am so handy at as that of undertaker, if I do say it myself. I am something of a lawyer, have worked as a tailor, can do a good job at bricklaying, and at shoemaking I am almost as good as I am at undertaking. In fact, I'm a handy man to have around, and I think I'll stay awhile anyhow."

"Do yer know ther rules of this hyer camp?" demanded a rough citizen.

"No; being a stranger, I do not, sir."

"Yer no doubt notices that we all wears gray shirts?"

"Yes, so you do; now that you speak of it. What is that for?"

"An' does yer know that this hyer camp ar' called Gray Shirt?"

"Yes; I had heard so."

"Well, ary galoot what comes hyer, an' intends ter stay more'n two days, has ter swear citizenship an' put on ther camp color. That's what you'll have ter do, too, if yer means ter stay."

"Well, that is a new wrinkle, sure. What is your idea in that? Why wouldn't a red shirt do just as well?"

"A red shirt? You let ary galoot come inter this hyer camp with a red shirt on, an' thar'd be need fer a ondertaker, mighty quick!"

"You speak in riddles, my dear sir. I can't understand what you are driving at. Perhaps it is fortunate for me that I have not a red shirt on my own person—the fact is I haven't any on."

His coat was buttoned high up, and this was evidently the truth, or at any rate it was not challenged.

"Then we kin soon explain ther p'int," declared the rough citizen. "Say, Mr. Maybree," turning to him, "you onwind ther tale fer him, will yer?"

"Why certainly," agreed Walt, "if you want me to. Somebody will have to do it, if it is the gentleman's intention to remain here and become a citizen of our town."

With that preliminary, the young man launched out and gave the history of the rival camps,

stating all the particulars which it would be essential for a prospective new citizen to be acquainted with.

The lazy and sleepy stranger listened attentively to the end, when he roused up and drawled out:

"Why don't you send a delegate over there to whip the best man they can produce? I'm handy with my fists, along with my other accomplishments, and I'd like no better fun. Swear me in, citizens, and send me."

CHAPTER VII.

UNDERTAKER STIFF'S UNDERTAKING.

AT such a proposal as this, from such a source, the crowd laughed wildly.

Mr. Stiff looked around as solemnly as an owl, with never a smile upon his own grim visage.

"Don't you think I could do it, gentlemen?" he demanded. "I would like to prove to you that I am everything I claim to be."

"But ther idee o' your going over ter Red Shirt ter whip ther best man!" the rough citizen laughed. "Why, man alive, you would git chewed up so fine that you'd never know yerself ergain."

"Of course you would!" exclaimed the fancy hotel clerk and bartender. "You are too slow to hold your end up with Red Shirt, my friend; too Stiff, as it were. You may be a good enough undertaker in one way, but you don't want to undertake that sort of job."

"That is plain enough, friend," agreed Walt Maybree. "We have some good men here at Gray Shirt, but I don't believe there is a man in the camp you could hire to undertake what you propose. It would be as good as death to him if he did, and so they would not want to risk it. You are a blower, I take it."

"That is where you make your mistake," was the lazy drawl. "Life is too short and breathing is too much like work to waste breath in idle talk. I meant what I said, and now that you have picked me up on it I'm ready to back it. If you have got a good man around anywhere, trot him out and let me hook horns with him just for a friendly round."

The crowd laughed louder than ever at this. The proposal was really too ridiculous for anything.

And especially did it seem to tickle the rough citizen who has been mentioned several times. He laid back his head and fairly roared.

"You had better be careful how you talk," cautioned the fancy clerk. "You may find somebody to do you up, without looking very far. We have some tough customers here at Gray Shirt."

"And Ben Dooley here is not the least of them, either," added Walt Maybree, indicating the rough citizen who was taking it as such a joke. "Maybe he will take up your challenge, and prove to you how easy it is to be mistaken."

"Durn me ef I wouldn't like ter take some of ther consait out o' him," Mr. Dooley declared. "I wouldn't want ter hurt him, though, an' I would only do et in fun, yer know. What d'yer say, Mister Stiff? Will yer tackle me jest fer a friendly go, an' let me take a fall out of yer?"

"I'm your man," Mr. Stiff drawled lazily. "All I ask is that you won't handle me too rough, and if you find that you have got me all right, that you won't let me down. I'll call it a fall for you anyhow, and it will save me the work of getting up. If I once got laid out on the floor, it would be a big temptation to lie right still and go to sleep."

"You're ther durndest laziest man that I ever seen!" cried Mr. Dooley. "I will wake you up a little, if I get half a show at ye. No gettin' mad, you know, and no drawin' weep-ins."

"All right, Mr. Dooley, that is understood. It would be too much like work anyhow, to draw weapons. This is only in a friendly way, and no need to get mad."

"Then you will try me, will yer?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Then git ready."

"I'm ready."

The sleepy stranger had shambled out to the middle of the open space on the floor, and lazily braced himself for the effort.

Ben Dooley, the rough citizen, swaggered forward to meet him, and when they were face to face, remarked:

"Mister Stiff, I hate ter touch you; you look too durn lazy ter stand up, anyhow."

"Don't mind that," was the drawl; "grab right on and stand me on my head."

"But no strikin'," Dooley ruled. "I wouldn't want ter hit ye."

"All right; no striking allowed," Mr. Stiff assented.

"Jest a fair an' plain 'rassle, no more."

"That's well understood."

"Look out, then!"

Everybody was smiling broadly, anticipating some rare fun.

But it was rather awkward for Mr. Dooley to begin. His opponent stood so careless that it seemed a pity to molest him.

"Well, come on," Mr. Stiff invited, as Dooley hesitated; "it is hard work to stand here doing nothing, my good friend. Let's have it over with."

"All right; look out fer me, then. Now I'm comin' fur ye, an' hyer ye go on yer head. Come, stiffen yer muscles, so's I'll know I've got hold o' somethin'. Now, presto, change!"

With that exclamation, Mr. Dooley made an effort, intending to give Mr. Stiff a sudden fling that would lay him on his back ingloriously. But, there was a surprise in store for him. At the same instant the sleepy man seemed to go off like a keg of giant powder, and Mr. Dooley went spinning away on his ear to a distant corner.

Nobody could see how it had been done, and the lazy man looked as weary as ever, there seeming not to be any life in him. It did not seem possible that such a thing had really happened.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated the fancy clerk. "How did he do it?"

"Not as lazy as he looks, I guess," remarked Walt Maybree, smiling at the result.

"That's the kind of an undertaker I am, gentlemen," drawled Mr. Stiff. "No foolin' about me when I undertake a job."

"Gosh all lightnin'!" cried Mr. Dooley, as he gathered himself up after his collapse in the corner. "Is this hyer me or somebody else?"

"What is the matter, Ben?" inquired young Maybree.

"Matter! Gosh all lightnin'! Ther durn galoot ar' set on springs!"

This raised a howl of laughter. Mr. Dooley was about half-mad now, and eager for more.

"But yer can't do et ergain!" he cried. "Gosh all lightnin', no! I wasn't lookin' fer nothin' like that. Hyer I come, Mister Stiff."

"Come right along!" the "undertaker" drawled. "The combination is set, and all you have got to do is to touch the spring. I go off wonderfully easy, when you tamper with me."

"I'll be lookin' out fer ye this hyer time, old hoss. Yer can't do et again, an' I'm bettin' rocks on et. Now jest look out fer yourself, fer if I git a grip on yer I'm goin' ter wipe up ther floor with yer, an' don't yer fergit it!"

As he ended, Mr. Dooley made another rush to the attack, and seemed to catch the lazy man about as fairly as he could. No better hold could have been asked for, apparently. But the result was about the same as before. There was a sudden awakening for a second on the part of the stranger, and away went Dooley.

This time he was stood fairly on his head, and was sent spinning off like a top, for some distance, when he collapsed as before and came down all in a heap.

Now the crowd awakened to the fact that the stranger was something with his muscles. That he was too much for Dooley was plain.

The fancy clerk was too amazed to comment, and Walt Maybree smiled broadly as he witnessed Dooley's discomfiture.

"Gosh all lightnin'!" yelled Dooley, as he scrambled up once more. "How do yer do et, stranger? I'll try et oncet more, an' ef yer kin do et again I'll chuck up ther sponge."

"I'll try and satisfy you this time, then," promised the "undertaker." "It is too much like work for me, standing here waiting for you all the time. How will you have it this time? I can give you one with extra trimmings at no more cost."

"Durn yer drawlin', lazy tongue, I'll show yer this hyer time! You jest let me have a holt, an' say ready, an' then see whar you'll be."

"All right; I'll do that. Say when you are ready, and then let her go. If you throw me I'll treat."

The stranger allowed Mr. Dooley to take just such a hold as he wanted, and as soon as Dooley gave the word the fun began.

This time it cost the sleepy stranger more of an effort, as could be seen, for Dooley hung on desperately; but his hold was soon broken, and away he went, half-way to the ceiling, coming down with a crash that jarred the windows.

Now the crowd cheered, and Mr. Stiff was the lion of the hour. It was plain that he was more of a man than he had appeared to be at first sight. There was dynamite in his make-up.

Mr. Dooley rolled over, sat up, and glared around foolishly at the laughing crowd.

"Gosh all lightnin'!" he ejaculated, rather meekly, "I wonder whar he carries et?"

"Are you satisfied?" asked the stranger, with his usual drawl.

"Yes," was the reply, "I'm satisfied. Don't want no more."

"Then I'll sit down and rest a bit. More real exercise than I have taken in six months before."

"Who are you, anyhow?" demanded the fancy clerk.

The lazy man groaned.

"Tired as I am," he sighed, "you will poke questions at me. Look on the Register, young man, and there's my name. What I am I have told you already."

"Yes; but you can't put that yarn down our necks, you know. We know better. A man of your caliber was never an undertaker. I'll bet you are more than you seem on the surface."

"Which I have tried to prove to you," agreed the stranger. "I told you I am a Jack at all trades. But to go back to the point where we started, if you want to send a delegate over to that camp of Red Shirt, send me."

"Would you undertake such a job as that?" asked Walt Maybree.

"I'd undertake anything," was the sleepy answer. "I have enlisted my sympathies with this camp of yours, and I'm against Red Shirt tooth and nail. If you want a little sweet revenge for that dosed rum racket they played on you, just let me go over and whip their chief."

"Et would be a good idee, stranger," spoke Ben Dooley, now upon his feet once more, "but et would be suerside fer you. You may be some on ther rassle, but yer could never lick ther hull camp o' Red Shirt which ar' about what you'd have ter do ef yer went thar."

"I'd take the chances of that," was the drawled response. "You jest swear me in as a Gray Shirt, and if I don't undertake to uphold the dignity of your camp, then you may hang me, that's all."

"Gosh all lightnin'!" cried Dooley, "but I'd like ter see et, ef et could be done. Say, fellers, let's let him tackle Hard-fist Pete ter-night, an' ef he kin do him up he ar' a chief fer a fack. What d'yer say, stranger?"

"That suits me," Mr. Stiff drawled. "I'm willing to undertake anything that comes in my way. If this Hard-fist Pete is your best man, let's see him, and if he don't disable me I'll go to Red Shirt anyhow. Now that you have got me excited, there's no holding me."

This was talked over at length, and it was arranged that the stranger and the local "bruiser" should meet that night at eight. Mr. Stiff's stock was on the rise at this camp of Gray Shirt.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRANGER'S SPURS WON.

NOW this man mentioned, this Hard-fist Pete, was the terror of Gray Shirt.

He was a strapping fellow, raw of bone and huge of muscle, and was cock of the walk at the camp.

Whenever a pilgrim from Red Shirt, hunting for fight, ventured to show himself at Gray Shirt, he had to tackle Hard-fist Pete.

Several had come over for the purpose of snatching Pete's laurels from his brow and carrying them off, but failure had been the result in every instance.

This was a good while ago, however, and of late no red shirt had been seen at the camp. And Pete, in his turn, took care not to be seen at Red Shirt, believing he would be killed if he went there.

Perhaps he was right, too. Anyhow, he had refused all challenges, unless under the conditions that the challenger should come to Gray Shirt to fight. Here he was assured that he would have fair play, as could not be believed would be the case were he to go there.

All this and a good deal more was explained to the long-named "undertaker," to let him know just what sort of mission he was thinking about undertaking, but it did not serve to turn him from his purpose.

So it was decided that a friendly round or two with Hard-fist Pete was to settle the question, and the coming event was eagerly looked forward to.

The remainder of the afternoon passed quietly enough, with nothing further of an exciting nature taking place.

Mr. Stiff spent most of the time resting, but did go out a little to look around the camp.

He seemed to give a little casual attention to the mine, the Last Chance, and to its surround-

ings; and a keen observer might have noticed that he was taking note of every person who came within his range of vision.

And he attracted a good deal of attention, too, for since his "round" with Ben Dooley, his name had been handled pretty freely, and he was an object of much curious notice. He seemed to see nothing of that, but shambled and shuffled around as though too tired to lift his feet quite clear of the ground.

Long before the hour named, the bar-room of the Hotel Royal was crowded, and betting was freely indulged in, with the odds largely in favor of Hard-fist Pete, who was known for what he was worth.

Those who had not witnessed the fray between the stranger and Mr. Dooley, and had only the stranger's appearance to support what was said of him, rather doubted his ability.

A little before eight Mr. Stiff shambled into the room, looking lazy or tired, or both; and rested himself against the end of the bar where the clerk's desk was.

Only a little further away was Mr. Hard-fist Pete, who, at sight of the man who was to be his opponent, laughed heartily.

He had not seen Mr. Stiff before, and his impression of him at sight was that he would prove an easy victim.

"Put thet 'ar thing up afore me?" he sneered. "Why, boyees, thar won't be nothin' left of him when I gits done with him."

"That's what we all says," declared another voice.

"Better wait an' see how it wull be," advised yet another.

Said one man:

"Ef yer had seen ther way he dumped Dooley, mebbey yer would think twice afore yer smiled so loud at him."

"Mebby you'd like ter take his place," cried Hard-fist Pete, banteringly. "I will do you up jest ter git my hand in while I'm waitin', if yer says so."

"No, not any in mine, ef yer please," the fellow declined. "Et wouldn't be a big s'prise ter me, though, ter see you git done up. You don't know what a rip-snorter ther undertaker ar'."

"Git done up by thet 'ar thing! Haw! haw! haw!"

So went the comments around; and while they waited for time, Walt Maybree entered in company with Fred Upworth of Red Shirt.

The young man, Fred, had laid off his red shirt for the occasion; indeed it would not have been well for him to have appeared at Gray Shirt with it on; and was well dressed.

The pair were talking together, and came forward to the end of the bar near to where the lazy-looking stranger was reclining.

"This is the man who is to try his hand against Hard-fist, Mr. Upworth," said Walt, in voice loud enough for the weary stranger to overhear.

Mr. Stiff turned his head in a tired way and took a survey of the young man from Red Shirt. But it was only in a casual way, and no particular attention was given to it.

"Well, he will get done up, that's all," Fred prophesied, in lower tone.

"I'm not so sure of that," declared Walt. "And if he wins, then our boys are going to send him over to your place as a delegate from our camp."

"And he will be a good one, if he does get away with Pete," Upworth declared. "Send him along, and we'll see that he has fair play."

"That is easy to say," responded Walt, to that, "but will you see that he gets it?"

"Yes, I will, I promise you that, if I am there."

"We can't ask anything else."

"And he'll get that."

Pretty soon Mr. Stiff was notified that it was time for him to prepare for the coming event.

"I'm all ready," he lazily drawled. "I have been thinking, however," he added, "that maybe this gentleman and myself had better fight with gloves, if there are any such articles in the camp."

"Haw! haw! haw!" laughed Hard-fist Pete. "That's ther fu't showin' of ther white feather, by darn ef et ain't!"

"Look at it that way if you want to," the stranger drawled, "but I'll tell you what my reason is: We have no cause to be anything but friends, and this is to be a friendly test of skill, I believe. Then why should we punish each other with bare fists?"

"But that ar' what ther boys ar' lookin' fur," declared Pete.

"No matter about anybody else; it's for you and I to settle the matter. What do you say? If

you are a better man than I, I don't want my face all battered up for nothing."

"Yer hears what he says, fellers," cried Pete; "what does yer say to et?"

"Let it be with gloves, by all means," cried Walt Maybree.

"All right, if you say so; but yer wants ter understand that et wasn't none o' my askin'. I ain't afraid o' my face, if he ar'."

This having been settled, gloves were hunted up, somebody at the camp happening to have a set, and by that time the hour for the performance to begin had rolled around.

All this while Hard-fist Pete had been swaggering around, declaring that it was a shame for him to fight with such a specimen as the lazy-looking stranger, and that he really felt ashamed of himself for his part in it; but it wasn't for him to back out of it.

He was willing to let the man off, though, any time he wanted to withdraw, and let him go free. Didn't see what his fellow-citizens were thinking about, to pit such a man as this against him.

At last all was ready, and the two faced each other.

Now was to be settled for good the question of the stranger's worth as an acquisition to the camp.

"Whar will yer have ther first one now?" demanded Pete, as he flourished his gloved fists in the air. "Nominate yer spot, an' I'll oblige yer quick."

"Well, tap me on the nose to begin with," the lazy stranger drawled. "I can't fight worth a cent till I get a good one on the proboscis; that riles me up, every time."

"All right, then, hyer yer has et!"

With that exclamation Hard-fist struck out, but without effect. Greatly to his surprise his arms were brushed aside without the least effort, seemingly.

This caused him to redden somewhat, and he tried again, but with like result. And then he aimed blow after blow, waxing hotter at every stroke, but without touching the sleepy stranger once.

This lasted for a minute or two, and by that time Pete was enraged, as everybody was hooting at him, asking him why he didn't hit the mark, and a hundred other such questions.

"I'll show yer whether I can't hit yer or not!" he howled. "I'll give ye one now that'll make ye dizzy. Look out fer me, I'm gittin' mad!"

Now he rushed to the attack like a maddened tiger, striking blow after blow as hard and fast as he could deliver, but all to no purpose.

"Cuss yer," he cried, panting, "et ar' ther gloves that ar' botherin' me. I can't do nothin' wi' gloves on!"

Throwing them off, he made another attack, fighting as hard as he had ever fought in his life.

The lazy, sleepy stranger was wide enough awake now, and warded every blow with a skill that seemed marvelous.

Finally, half out of breath, the fellow drew back and leaned against the bar, with an expression on his face comical to behold. He eyed the stranger with a wondering gaze.

"Wull, I ber durn!" he ejaculated.

"Not going to give it up, are you?" drawled the undertaker. "I haven't had my share of the fun yet."

"Let me git my wind fer jest a second," was the response, "an' I'll show yer whether I've give et up or not! I'll do yer up afore I'm done with yer."

"That's the talk!" cheered the crowd. "Don't let no stranger like this come hyer an' beat you, Hard-fist. Get yer wind an' go fer him again, an' give him rats! You kin do et, ef yer tries hard enough!"

Mr. Stiff allowed his opponent to rest for a few minutes, and then he went for him hard.

"Come, now, time is up," he drawled; "let's finish the business, for I am getting tired and want to sit down."

Hard-fist had to defend himself, since now the other was making the attack, but the defense was weak as compared with the other's aggressive movements.

First Pete got a tap on one shoulder, then a gentle reminder on the other, and the next he knew, a blow on the breast lifted him off his feet and carried him headlong into the crowd.

Mr. Stiff had still retained the gloves, so his blow was not hurtful though hard enough to have felled an ox.

"Hooray! hooray!" yelled the crowd. "That's ther stuff! Ther stranger ar' our man! He's our delegate ter Red Shirt, an' don't yer fergit it?"

And amidst the hooting and yelling and the

volley of remarks on every hand, the fallen bruiser scrambled to his feet, looking about him in the most silly way that can be imagined.

"Stranger," he said, "they tells me you is a undertaker," offering his hand; "but I tells 'em you is a chief! You is a better man than I be, by a long shove! An' ef you'll go over ter Red Shirt, as ther delegate from hyer, an' knock ther consait out of some of ther galoots over thar, I'll be yer friend fer life."

CHAPTER IX.

UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS.

THE lazy Mr. Stiff was the hero of the hour. And he was urged to take upon himself the honor of citizenship without delay.

The camp would be proud of him, and he would have no cause to regret his allegiance with the Gray Shirts.

Mr. Stiff was ready to comply with this request, and the oath of citizenship was administered forthwith, and he was made a Gray Shirt.

"I happen to have a shirt of about this particular color in my bundle," he announced, "and I'll appear in it in the morning. I'm with you, citizens, out and out; and against Red Shirt to the teeth."

"You hear that?" remarked Walt Maybree, smiling, speaking to Fred Upworth. "Your camp will have to look out."

"Yes; I hear it," assented Upworth. "But he wants to keep clear of Red Shirt, or some of our tigers over there will make a meal off him."

"Are you from that camp of Red Shirt, sir?" Mr. Stiff asked, turning upon the young man.

"Yes; I belong there," was the response.

"But you haven't the color of your camp on now."

"Because I am here on peaceful business, and only on a short visit."

"Oh! I see. Well, when you return, kindly give the respects of Sigismund Sophocles Stiff to your fellow-citizens, and tell them I am coming over there in a day or two to clean their clock for them."

"I will so inform them, sir; but you had better keep away. We have a new man there now, a fighter who has whipped every other chief in the place, and who has been threatening to come over here to tackle this man Hard-fist. He is a bad man."

"Good enough!" cried the undertaker. "My especial regards to him, and tell him that I'm coming over there to do him up. What do you call him?"

"He is called Terror Ted, in a familiar way."

"All right, tell him I'm coming."

The fight was over, and the antagonists were on friendly terms still, but the excitement ran high.

Gray Shirt had not had such a waking up in a long while, and the citizens let themselves loose to do honor to the occasion.

Finally the stranger, or rather newly made citizen, announced his desire to retire, declaring himself exceedingly tired; and with a good-night to all, shuffled out of the room.

He carried his bundle with him, and when alone in his room, opened the parcel and took out first a gray shirt, which he donned at once. That done, some further alterations were made in his appearance, and he looked another person entirely.

Opening the door, he peered out into the hall, and seeing no one there, came out, locking the door after him, and descended the stairs and passed out to the street. He looked now like a rough-and-ready miner, and a belt at his waist carried the usual array of weapons.

Stopping in a shadowed place, he waited.

Men were leaving the bar-room now and again, singly or in pairs, and his eyes searched every face as they came out.

Presently Walt Maybree and Fred Upworth appeared, and leaving the hotel, went off down the street in company. And the watcher went after them, silently.

Keeping well in the shadows, he could hardly be seen, and it was not likely that the young men would discover his presence. There was something about his movements which spoke of experience in this sort of work.

But the reader knows well who the person was, so why not apply his rightful name? It was Deadwood Dick, and the game against Iron John, the outlaw, and his band, the Montana Marauders, had fairly begun. How it would end remains to be revealed.

Finally, in the the deep shadow of a deserted building, the two young men stopped, continuing their conversation.

Dick passed quickly around the building, coming near to the pair on the other side.

"I tell you it is altogether useless," were the first words he caught.

"But, I will not give up," responded young Upworth, determinedly. "I love the lady, Walt, and must have her."

"And it is the same in my case," Walt Maybree admitted. "What are you going to do about it though? The opposition is strong, and there seems no way of breaking it down."

"If Irma would only consent to elope with me, we could easily arrange to make a double party of it for I am sure Tilly would go with you without much asking on your part. But, that is where it is hinged, it seems."

"No; you needn't look for anything of that sort from a girl like Irma," Walt assured. "She wouldn't do it under any circumstances, I don't believe, and certainly not, when she doesn't seem to be overmuch in love with you. You can see how it is for yourself."

"Yes; I see only too well. But couldn't you urge the thing for me a little, Walt?"

"I don't believe it would do any good. She has a mind of her own."

"But I have done much for you with Tilly, and—"

"I never asked you to."

"I know; but—"

"It's no use. I wouldn't try to influence my sister one way or the other in the matter, Fred."

"I thought you were my friend. I have done that much for you with my sister, and I would do more, too, if necessary."

"It was without any asking on my part, as I said before. You must do your own love-making. I warn you, though, that it won't do for father to catch you."

"Ha! ha! ha! We are on even terms there, and I'm glad of it. It won't be healthy for my father to see you after Tilly, either. We can easily overcome the opposition though, if we work together."

"I'm going to be frank with you, Fred Upworth. I'm going to tell you plainly that you are not just the sort of man I would like to see Irma marry. Not that I have said a word against you, or intend to, but I can't say anything in your favor."

"Well, curse your coolness, anyhow! You stand here and tell me this to my face, Walt Maybree!"

"I do. Isn't that better than to say it behind your back?"

"Then you don't like me, eh?"

"I don't have a very brotherly regard for you, though I wouldn't do anything to injure you if I knew it."

"And I suppose I ought to give you credit for that much. But you'll maybe think better of me after I've become your brother-in-law."

"Which I do not think will ever happen. I don't believe Irma cares anything about you, and—"

"And I don't care whether she does or not; she shall be mine just the same! Do you understand that?"

"I very much doubt it, Fred. She's a girl you can't drive, and you will have to use fair means or none with her. I doubt it."

"But, I tell you, she *shall* be mine! You have refused me a slight favor—have even added insult to your refusal, but I'll show you that I can manage the affair without you."

"I'm sorry for it all, Fred, but I've been open and frank with you. That is the way I would like any man to be with me."

"Well, I'll give you what you like, then. I'm going to be against you now in regard to Tilly. How do you like that for a change? You wouldn't repay favor with favor; now I'll give you the opposite."

"I don't believe your interference one way or the other will make any difference," responded Maybree. "If anything, opposition is likely to work in my favor more than against me."

"I'll show you about that, too. I thought you were my friend, but now that I know you for what you are, I will—"

"I am not by any means your enemy, Fred Upworth."

Upworth was angered, and his tone was hot and sharp. Maybree was cool and easy in manner, and his tone even.

Deadwood Dick, as he listened to the talk, was enabled to understand much he had desired to get hold of. It gave him an insight into the characters of the young men.

"Enemy or not," fired Upworth, "we are done, and may as well part."

"Just as you please. But you won't return to Red Shirt to-night, will you? You might fall in with Iron John."

"Iron John, indeed!" was the hot retort. "I

might be as well received by him as I have been here. Brother-in-law, good-night."

With that, Upworth wheeled and stalked off in the darkness, leaving Maybree gazing after him as he disappeared, and the parting was not responded to.

"Well, he is hot-headed to-night, that is sure," Walt muttered to himself. "I like him less the more I see of him. Irma shall never marry him if I have anything to say about it. But then I guess there is no danger."

Leaving the shelter of the deserted building, he retraced his steps toward the hotel.

As soon as he had gone, Deadwood Dick set off in the direction Fred Upworth had taken.

He might not be able to find him again, or he might; it was about an even chance.

He wanted to learn more about this personage, if possible.

Not far had he proceeded, when he was challenged out of the darkness at his right.

"Is that you, Tom?" a voice demanded.

Dick recognized the voice of young Upworth.

"No; I ain't Tom," Dick gruffly responded.

"Who be you?"

"Et don't matter, so long ez you ain't ther galoot I'm lookin' fer," was the return.

"Waal, yer needn't git buffy about et, anyhow," rejoined Dick. "I wasn't goin' ter force meself onter yer company."

"That's all right, pard, an' no damage done."

Dick went on, taking no pains to be silent, but when he had proceeded far enough to be out of hearing, he turned suddenly and hurried silently back the same way he had come.

As he drew near to the spot where Upworth had spoken to him, he turned off to the left, making a detour in order to come up behind the place where the man had been.

Moving as silently as a shadow, almost, he presently came up behind a large boulder he had noticed during the afternoon, and there stopped.

Presently his keen ears told him he was not alone, for another man was just on the opposite side of the big rock.

Only a little time passed, when steps were heard, and again the man spoke the same challenge.

This time it was answered in the affirmative, and another person turned and came up to the boulder, joining with Upworth in a low-toned conversation.

CHAPTER X.

NOCTURNAL EVENTS AT RED SHIRT.

THE camp of Red Shirt was wrapped in darkness and slumber.

Not that every denizen was asleep, but the figure seems the proper one to employ.

Certain it was that all lights were out, and all the places closed and barred for the night. Even the Bung-Hole was dark and silent.

When that popular resort closed its doors and put out its lights, then it was high time that every other light should go out; but it was seldom that any remained to that time.

The reader may question the purpose of introducing a scene at this camp at so unseemly an hour, but let him remember that the author seldom makes a move without a purpose in view, and patiently follow where he is led.

Suddenly, from a ledge of rock behind the hotel, at a little distance away and higher than any of the buildings, flashed forth a light.

It was small but bright, and looked not unlike that of a tiny bull's-eye with a silvered reflector.

The one peculiar thing about this light was, that it could not be seen from the street of the camp, but only from a point almost equal in height with the light.

The explanation of this is simple: the ledge of rock being not level, but on an incline, with the higher part fronting the camp. So, with the light a little back from the edge, the ledge itself hid it from view.

For a time it blazed there, like a lone star, and then away off in the distance, sending its tiny ray flashing down through a narrow defile of the mountains, appeared another light, a companion to the first, and for a while they glared at each other in a manner that might be likened to friendliness or defiance, either.

After that, changes took place, slowly at first, but presently more rapidly. The first light was darkened for the space of a second, when it flashed forth again. And the next moment the other repeated the same, as though it were a signal.

For a few seconds, then, both lights disappeared, but presently the first was seen again, in a series of flashes, of longer or shorter duration, and then darkness as before.

Immediately the other light took on the same peculiarity, in its turn, as if taking up the series of flashes where the first had stopped, and carrying it on.

And so for an hour, steadily, back and forth these signals of lights were exchanged, with untiring continuity.

While this was going on, and only a little while before the mentioned hour had expired, a horseman rode into the camp.

His horse was walking, and the rider himself had something of a wearied air about him.

He was nearing the center of the camp, and was turning toward the stables of the hotel, when something caused him to glance away to the right.

There he caught sight of the light flashing in the distance, and stopping his horse, sat and gazed at it wonderingly. What was it, and what did it mean? He could not answer.

Finally the light flashed for the last time, and darkness closed permanently over the place where it had been seen, as though at last it had succeeded in an effort to blot it out. The rider looked for some time longer, but it appeared no more.

"What was that light?" he asked himself, as he rode on, "and what was the meaning of it? This is something that has got to be looked into."

Proceeding to the stables, he slipped out of the saddle, quietly put away his horse, and returned to the street.

Standing for some minutes before the hotel, he looked off in the direction where the light had been seen, but nothing was to be seen of it now, and presently he moved on.

The night was a dark one, the stars being hid by clouds, and objects were not discernible at any great distance away.

Just as this man started on, a great, black figure came around the corner of the hotel and went up the street in the direction he was going.

The man stopped at sight of the figure, and waited until it had got ahead of him a little distance, when he moved on after it, a hand upon a weapon, ready to use if necessary.

Moving silently, and keeping only near enough not to lose sight of the figure, he followed it to the door of Garry Long's cabin.

There it stopped, and the person—as a person it was—knocked lightly upon the door.

The watcher drew as near as he thought he could without risk of being discovered, and there waited.

No response was made to the knocking, and presently it was repeated.

This time it brought a sound from within, and soon a voice demanded to know who was there.

"Hit am me, chile," was the low-voiced response. "Open de doah an' lef me come in. Hit am only Dine."

Low as the words were, they were plainly distinct to the spy, and he knew immediately who the dark figure was. It was old Dinah, the cook at the saloon.

Presently the door opened, a dim light was seen within, and in the light appeared the young woman stranger who had the day before hired the cabin, but whose name had not yet been learned.

The negress hastened in, the door was closed after her, and as soon as it was shut the watcher hastened forward, stepped to the door with careful tread, and applied his ear to catch whatever might be said between the two within.

"You are late, Dinah," the young woman remarked. "I must have slept a long time. I lay down with my clothes on."

"Shua I is late," was the response. "I done thought dat blame ol' ranch nebber gwine ter git ter sleep in de worl' shua. But, hyer I is, chile, and now, Missy Lily, I mus' hug yo' oncet."

There was a sound within, as though the young woman had fallen into the embrace of a friendly bear.

"Goodness! you have squeezed the life out of me, Dinah!" was the exclamation immediately following. "Sit down now, and let's have a talk. I must hear everything you can tell me."

About at this time another interested watcher drew near to the cabin to learn something.

It was another man, a man muffled in dark clothes, and in one hand carrying something that looked like a bull's-eye lantern closed.

This person had been coming silently up the street when the door of the cabin opened, and in the light that shone out he saw a man crouching at a little distance.

Concluding immediately that some mischief was intended, or that crooked work of some sort was going on, he passed around and came to the cabin from the rear, where there was a

curtained window partly protected by a broken broad shutter.

This second spy had somewhat the advantage of the first, for the curtain was thin, and he could look into the room and discern the figures of the two women and what they were doing, as well as hear all that was said between them. After all her caution, the negress had evidently chosen the very worst moment of the whole night to pay this visit to the young woman.

"An' dat's what I'll done tol' yo'," was the response to the girl's last remark. "Now yo' is heah, an' yo' mus' hab all de facks I kin gib yo'. Oh, old Dine hab made no fool job ob hit, you bet!"

"I can readily believe that, Dinah."

"Yo' bet yo' life yo' kin, chile. I didn't send fo' yo' fo' nothin'. What I knows I knows jest as well as anybody."

"But, tell me all, Dinah, and in as few words as possible. What have you learned concerning the fate of my poor sister? Do you know whether she is living or dead?"

At this the man at the door gave a start, his teeth set together with a snap, and he listened eagerly for more.

"She am dead," was the sorrowful response. "She an' de baby am bofe dead, poor chile! But de willain am alive, an' you bet we has got hit in fo' him in a way dat will mak' him wish he hadn't nebber been born!"

"You have not told me his name," spoke the girl.

"Hit am Fred Upworth, dat's what hit am."

The man at the door, could he have been seen, would have exhibited signs of greatest agitation. There was something in this that had interest for him.

"But have you proof against him?" inquired the girl.

"Yes; I hab de proof, too. Yo' wait till we corners him, an' see if I hasn't proof 'nough."

"How long has my sister been dead?"

"More dan six long months, shua."

"And did he—he—kill her?"

"Mebby not, right out, missy; but in de sight ob de good Lawd he am a murderer jest de same."

"Then he abused her?"

"Mos' shamefully! An' she done die."

"Poor, erring Mazie! But he shall pay for it, Dinah; I have sworn that he shall pay for it!"

"I sh'u'd smile ef he didn't, chile! Hangin' is a heap sight too good fo' a willain like he am. How we is goin' ter git at him am fo' you ter say, missy. Hi doan' got not much brain fo' anything in de way ob layin' plans, though I kin 'bey orders 'mazin'ly well. Yo' mus' do all de plottin' in de game."

"Very well; but tell me, if you know, where is my sister buried?"

"I hab l'arned dat, too, missy. Hit am erbout a mile from dis bery camp, at a lone spot in de mountings."

"Poor Mazie! poor Mazie! But your proof, Dinah. There is no chance to be mistaken in the man, you say."

"Nary bit ob a chance. I hab de proof all right; all yo' wants am ter git yo' han's on him."

"And that I will do. I shall begin my efforts to-morrow."

"But how is yo' gwine ter do it?"

"Here is a thought that has come to me. See what you think of it. I will seek his acquaintance and lead him to love me, if I can. Then, when the time is ripe, I will lure him into the hills, to a place agreed upon with you beforehand, and there we will take revenge that is justly ours. We will hang him!"

"Sarve him right! Sarve him jes' right!" the negress excitedly exclaimed.

"You can take me to the place where poor Mazie lies, you know, and we will let that be the scene of our revenge. I can lure him there, once I make him regard me with his evil passion mis-called love, and once there, and in our power, his fate will be in our hands. Oh! how I shall long for that hour to come! It is terrible, I know; but I will be equal to the occasion."

The man at the door allowed his lips to curl in a smile, and gave a meaning shrug of the shoulders.

At the same instant the man at the rear of the cabin slipped, his elbow went crashing against the glass, and the two females sprung to their feet with cries of alarm.

To escape discovery, the man sprung from the window and dodged around the side of the cabin, where he came into sudden collision with the other man, who had hurried away from the door for similar reason. There was a slight exclamation from each, and a powerful light

was flashed into the face of one, revealing the features of Fred Upworth. Instantly the light was gone, and with it disappeared the other man in the darkness.

CHAPTER XI.

MEETING AT THE RENDEZVOUS.

DEADWOOD DICK listened in vain to overhear what the men said.

Their tones were too low, and drawing as near as he dared, with every risk of being discovered, he was still unable to hear.

Whatever they were talking about, it was plain that they wanted no one else to hear, and were cautious accordingly.

Their confab lasted some twenty minutes, and Dick did not catch that many words.

Finally they parted, Fred Upworth moving off down the valley and the other man retracing his steps toward the camp.

Who this person was, Dick had been unable to guess, though he was sure he had heard the voice before.

Believing he had no further need to shadow Upworth, and wanting to learn who this other man was, he followed him, keeping a little distance in the rear.

It was so dark that discovery was not likely to happen, and even if it did, it mattered little.

The man led the way straight to the hotel, Dick increasing his pace as they drew near, in order not to lose sight of the right person, and as the fellow passed into the bar-room, and the light fell upon him, Dick recognized Bob Dickens, the fancy day-clerk of the house.

Deadwood Dick smiled grimly to himself at this discovery. A suspicion that had entered his mind was confirmed.

Passing on, he went out of the camp in the other direction from that taken by Upworth, proceeding with care and caution over the unfamiliar ground.

When presently he came to the entrance to a canyon he was challenged, and responding correctly, advanced to where some horsemen were standing. These were members of the Domino band.

"Are you all here?" Dick asked.

"No; Double-Five hasn't come yet," was the reply.

"Very well, we must wait for him. Have you my horse?"

"Yes; this one is it. Come right this way, Captain Double-Six."

Dick advanced in the direction indicated, and was soon in the saddle.

But little was said, as the band waited in silence for the missing member, and after a short time another person was heard approaching.

Again the challenge was given, rightly responded to, and Walt Maybree, or the "Double-Five" of the band, came forward and joined them, inquiring if all were there.

"I am a little late," he observed, when he had mounted his horse. "Was detained by a person with whom I had to exchange some talk. In fact, it was Fred Upworth. But now we are all here, so let's be off."

"And the sooner the better," said Dick. "You lead the way, Double-Five, as you are better acquainted with the trail than I am."

"All right, Captain Double-Six. Give your order to start and we are off at once."

"It is given," responded Dick; and they set forward immediately.

There were five of the party, and their midnight journey was made in almost silence. Little was said by any of the party.

They were in the gray shirts and rough garb of the camp of Gray Shirt, and could they have been seen, upon their breasts would have been found the insignia of the Domino Doubles.

They pressed on as rapidly as possible, through a long and diverging course of canyon trails, then up the tortuous, mountain-side way that led to the plateau we have seen, and there they stopped.

When they had come to a stop, a challenging voice was heard.

"Who comes there?" was demanded.

"Dominoes," was the response.

"Who is captain?"

"Double-Six."

"Advance, Captain Double-Six, and give countersign."

Deadwood Dick rode forward a few paces, met the man who had challenged, and spoke the secret word.

"Has the Double-Four signaled yet?" Dick asked.

"No," was the response; "not yet. The light has not appeared."

"Shall we go on to the cavern, Double-Five?" turning to the lieutenant of the band.

"It is hardly worth while, till we have awaited the signal, is it?"

"So I think. We will wait here till the hour has arrived. Have you the signal-lamp with you, Double-Blank?"

"Yes; here it is."

A small bull's-eye was put in Dick's hand, and with its aid he looked at his watch.

"It lacks a little of the hour," he announced.

"We will go on and dispose of our horses, and by that time it will be up, and we can return on foot for the experiment."

They rode on to the cavern, where their animals were left, and after a few minutes' stay at the cabin, returned on foot to the plateau.

As they came out upon the rocky shelf, a light was seen blazing in the distance like a flaming star.

"There it is!" exclaimed Dick.

"And now to test the thing," added Maybree.

Deadwood Dick opened the slide of the lantern he had in hand, and its light flashed forth through the black void.

Followed then what has already been described at length, and for an hour the signaling was kept up, at the end of which time the lights were closed for good.

"It is a success!" exclaimed Double-Five.

"Captain Double-Six, I congratulate you upon the big success of your happy thought. We are going to win, and whatever secret is hid at Red Shirt shall soon be ours."

"This is one step in that direction, anyhow," answered Dick. "To-morrow afternoon I go there, and then will come the tug of war, I expect. Double-Ace will go ahead of me, disguised and wearing a red shirt, to communicate with you in case anything goes wrong with me."

"And Double-Four will remain here, to telegraph with you if required. We intend keeping a lookout here on the plateau."

"Yes; and now to the cabin, where we will await the coming of Double-Four."

Returning to the cavern and entering the cabin, they threw themselves upon blankets on the floor, being in need of the brief rest, and were soon asleep.

This was with the exception of the Double-Blank, who remained on guard; he having taken his sleep during the day and the earlier part of the night. And asleep they remained until the arrival of Double-Four.

Upon his arrival they were awakened, and a consultation and council of war occupied the ensuing half hour.

Plans were arranged, as far as could be, for the mode of procedure, and the night's work was done.

Before they left the rendezvous, however, Double-Four said he had something further to make known, in which they might feel disposed to take action.

"Perhaps you remember," he said to Deadwood Dick, "a young woman who was on the same stage with you yesterday."

"I remember her," Dick assured.

"She is at Red Shirt, and, I have reason to believe, in some danger."

"Then it shall be the business of the Domino Doubles to see that no harm comes to her," Dick decided.

"I thought you would say that."

"But what is her danger?"

"She has come to Red Shirt upon a mission of vengeance, and her intention has become known to her enemy."

"That's rather an awkward state of affairs for her," observed Double-Five. "Do you know who her enemy is?"

"Yes; but you may believe me mistaken. I want to assure you that I am not."

"Well, who is it?"

"Fred Upworth."

"Ho! Is that so? Let's have your story."

"It is soon told. After leaving the rock, I was coming through the camp to the place where I had left my horse, and everything was as black as tar. Suddenly the door of a cabin opened, sending out a light, and in that light I caught sight of the crouching form of a man. A big woman entered the cabin, the door having been opened by a girl, or young woman, as I took it to be; and the thought struck me that the man meant them no good."

"Well, I paused for a second, to consider what to do, and decided that if I stationed myself behind the cabin I should be ready at hand if help was needed. Going around, stealthily, I caught sight of the man again as I passed, this time with his ear at the door; and upon reaching the rear of the cabin I found there a window with a broken shutter, and was able to see and hear."

The two persons were a young lady and a negress. They were well-known to each other, and from their conversation I got hold of their business at Red Shirt.

"And if I overheard, so did Fred Upworth, of course. And what he heard must have made his ears tingle, I should say. But let me sum it up in my own words. This young woman, it seems, is in search of a lost sister, or the man who ruined her. The old negress was her advance guard as it were. She had come to Red Shirt, got hold of the truth, and then sent for the young woman to come there. The sister, Mazie by name, is dead, according to the old negress's story, and also a child which she seems to have had. And the rascal, the one responsible for the girl's death, is no other than Fred Upworth."

"The knave!" grated Walt Maybree.

"So say I," agreed the narrator. "His name was spoken out, so I know I am not mistaken. And now the plan is, to get him in their power and settle the score with him; and I tell you this sister of the dead girl has the pluck of a Nemesis! It is her intention to get up a flirtation with Upworth, lure him to the place where the dead sister is buried, and there she and the negress intend to hang him, as he undoubtedly deserves. But the dickens of it is, Upworth has heard it all, and will be on his guard; what is more, he may take steps against this young woman, to get her away from the camp before she can tell her story. You see she is in a bad situation, and does not know it."

"I will take a hand in this game, too," declared Deadwood Dick, immediately. "I will not see that woman harmed, but will on the other hand lend her what help I can toward righting the wrong that has been done. I have no regard for this Upworth, and from what I have seen and heard of him, think he is a rascal of first water."

"And I am glad that this much of his past career has come to light," declared Walt. "Now I will know how to deal with him, in a certain matter of which I will not speak now."

"I know to what you refer," said Dick. "You will do well to plant yourself determinedly in his way, in the plans he has on foot; for, judging by what we have heard now, he is equal to any crime, almost."

"What do you know concerning what his plans and intentions are?" Maybree demanded.

"I overheard your conversation with him to-night," Dick acknowledged.

CHAPTER XII.

BIG EXCITEMENT AT RED SHIRT.

THAT bit of information occasioned Walt Maybree a little surprise.

Dick explained to him, withholding however a part of the reason he had had in spying upon him; and further told of the secret conversation Upworth had had with the hotel clerk.

What he withheld was the fact that he had wanted to learn secretly more about him, Walt Maybree, himself. Coming there a stranger, as Dick had, there was no great reason why he should not have some suspicion regarding the intent of these self-styled Domino Doubles.

Now, however, his suspicion had been allayed, since he had learned more of the man with whom he had enlisted his services.

Perhaps Walt guessed this part of it, but if he did he made no allusion to it in any way.

"And," Dick concluded, "it will be well for you who remain at Gray Shirt to keep an eye upon Bob Dickens. You may find him up to some tricks that will be of interest to us."

"He shall be looked after," promised Double-Five. "And now, captain, if we are to get back into camp before daylight, we must be moving."

"I am ready," said Dick. "Let us go, and at once."

In a few minutes more they were in the saddle and out upon the return trail to Gray Shirt.

They reached their destination before it was light, and before any one was astir, and putting away their horses, sought their several beds.

Walt Maybree and Dick entered the hotel. Walt having a night key to a side door, and Dick lost no time in getting back into the room where the lazy "Mr. Stiff" was supposed to be taking solid comfort.

It was late for breakfast when a knock was heard at his door.

"Well, what's wanted?" Dick inquired, imitating the drawl he had used before, to suit the character.

"Why, you're late for breakfast," was the response. "You will have to hustle out of that if you expect to get any to-day."

Dick gave out a weary sigh.

"What care I for breakfast?" he drawled. "All I want is rest, and plenty of it. Let me sleep on till time for dinner, and then call me up. If any extra charge, I'll pay it."

"All right!" was the agreement; and the attendant went off mumbling something about this man's being the laziest specimen he had ever had the misfortune to fall in with in his life. He was more than lazy; the word was not forcible enough to express his condition.

So Dick fixed it all right for a whole forenoon of solid rest, to prepare for what was to come, and nothing was seen of "Mr. Stiff" that morning.

After dinner, however, he appeared in the bar-room, rigged out in his gray shirt, a citizen out and out.

He had already taken the oath of allegiance, as will be remembered.

"Well, how do you feel now?" inquired the fancy clerk.

"Pretty good, after my little nap," the weary stranger responded.

"Little nap!" exclaimed one man. "Ef I could sleep like you I'd be ther seven sleepers of ther world, by hornets!"

"An' ef yer could fight like he kin," chipped in another, "yer might be ther seven wonders of ther world, too. Ef yer ever gits licked, mister, I'd like ter see ther galoot what does et."

"And I expect I'll get it, sooner or later," the weary Mr. Stiff drawled. "I expect to run up against a snag some of these days, and get used up in the very worst kind of way. I may get it at this very camp of Red Shirt where I'm going."

The crowd set up a howl of protest.

"No! No! Yer must do up Red Shirt, ef yer never eat another meal! Ef yer gits licked thar, by t'arnel but we'll make yer build a coffin fer yerself when yer gits back, an' plant yer in et; we will, by darn!"

The self-styled undertaker smiled in a tired way.

"I'll try to hold up my end, citizens," he promised, "but if I get laid out, plant me under the friendly shade of a juniper bush, where the wind will sigh a solemn requiem over me. And put up a slab at my head, on which please inscribe: 'He undertook many things in his time; this time undertook too much.'"

This brought forth some laughter from those easily excited to mirth, and when it had subsided the lazy man called for his horse.

"I suppose it is about time for me to be off," he said. "How many of you citizens are going with me?"

The whole town was eager to go, but that was impossible. It would have been a signal for a general battle between the two camps.

Said one man:

"I ber dern ef we all wouldn't like ter go, mister, but et won't do. But I move, pards, thet we send over two or three fellers, not wearin' ther gray, ter see how ther thing goes. What's yer say on that?"

"That's ther idee!" chorused the rest. "Pick out yer men, boyees, an' let 'em go on a leetle ahead ter be on hand fer ther comin' of ther chief. Oh! but I bet thar'll be a whoopin' time at Red Shirt when our delegate gits thar! Haw! haw! haw!"

This was immediately agreed to, and Ben Dooley wanted to be one of the committee, but he was ruled out. It would look as though he had been sent to take a hand in, if the battle went against the delegate. So three others were speedily selected, and as soon as they had laid off their clanship colors they set out, the delegate following half an hour later.

Meantime Red Shirt was in a state of feverish expectancy.

Early that morning Fred Upworth had told about his visit to Gray Shirt, and of the proposed arrangements.

He did not underrate the ability of the fighting stranger, either, but rather tried to magnify it, if possible. He wanted to stimulate the local pride to the highest pitch, and put the gladiators of the home arena upon their muscle.

Of the home talent in the fistie way, Terror Ted, as he was called, undoubtedly ranked first.

He was a bigger man than Hard-fist Pete of Gray Shirt, and perhaps a better, though that point had never been tested.

A great, overgrown, broad-shouldered giant, he had easily vanquished the best men of the camp soon after his advent, and was now king of the arena.

Upon his arrival there, he had given his name as Big Ted; but when he had given two or three exhibitions of his fighting qualities, and had

"laid out" the best men the camp could produce, he was rechristened Terror Ted.

"Comin' hyer ter clean our clock fer us, ar' he?" he remarked, when the matter was made known to him. "Waal, now, I opine he wull find us ter home, with ther jigger out and ile on ther hinges; I do, by jumpin'! An' ef this hyer camp can't find a man ter lick him, by jumpin' I'll do et meself, that's all."

At first it was proposed that one Hiram Higgs, called Higgsey Hi, should be the one to defend the honor of the camp, but when Fred Upworth had dilated upon the extraordinary ability of the coming delegate, it was finally concluded that the camp could not afford to rest its case with any man inferior to Terror Ted; and he was accordingly told to get ready.

He took the matter very easily, remarking that he didn't think it was at all necessary for him to go into training for the affair.

Fred Upworth took him aside, though, and drilled it into his head that the fellow who was coming was likely to give him a pretty severe brush, and that he must make up his mind to it.

Further, he made him promise that he would not touch a drop of anything in the way of liquor until after the fight, and further, as an extra inducement, offered to give him a hundred dollars clean cash if he would whip his man. And this last was the clincher.

Terror Ted went around boasting what he would do when the time came, and his backer, at the same time, went around and gave orders that no one was to allow Ted to drink, under any condition or threat. This was a weakness the local chieftain had, and it was well known that if he laid aboard a load of "bug-juice" he would be likely to get used up in the fight.

But the promised hundred dollars filled Terror Ted's eye, and knowing his weakness well enough, he wisely kept away from temptation as much as possible, fortifying himself with the happy anticipation of the "gee-lorious old spree" he would have as soon as that hundred dollars was his.

"Let him come," he cried, exultingly, feeling of his muscles and flourishing his gigantic arms, "an' ef I don't jam his head down inter his stummick I'm a duffer! Why, fellers, I'm goin' ter larrup him so bad he won't remember who he was! Oh! let him come! an' jest let me git one paste at him! an' ef he don't double up like a wilted stinkweed, I'm a liar!"

That was a fair specimen of his boasting, to quote all of which would compel us to extend our story to a double number.

Late along in the afternoon three citizens from Gray Shirt, in neutral attire, rode into the camp.

The whole population of the place was congregated at the Bung Hole Saloon at the time.

The "delegate" was eagerly watched for, and at first it was thought that one of these must be he. But this was not the case, and the three rode forward leisurely and dismounted.

"Whar's ther delegate?" was the eager demand.

"Oh, he ar' comin'," was the answer. "We jest rode on ahead, ter tell yer he wull be hyer soon."

"Ther sooner ther better fer me!" cried Terror Ted. "I'm ther galoot what's most interestin' in this hyer thing."

"Well, we ventures ter remark thet mebbly it will be interestin' fer ye, afore yer gits done," another of the three observed. "If ther undertaker don't make ye hump ter git thar, I miss my guess."

"Mebby you'd like ter try a hand at et, while we wait—"

"Oh, no, thank yer; we has come over hyer in peaceful garb, as you kin see."

A volley of question, answer and remark went the rounds for some time, when suddenly another horseman was descried entering the valley.

"Hyar he comes!" cried somebody who was the first to see him. "Hyar comes a Gray Shirt, sure's yer born!"

"That's him," declared the advance guard. "Now, then, Mister Big Man, git yerself ready ter do him up, an' let's see how yer will make out."

Terror Ted had his eyes fixed upon the coming horseman, who was approaching at the slowest possible walk, and looked to be half-asleep as he sat in the saddle. He seemed as limp as a man of rags.

"Yer don't mean ter say thet aire thing ar' ther delegate, do yer?" he cried out in disgust. "Ef et ar', in marcey to him go out an' meet him an' turn him back. I couldn't hit him light enough not ter kill him; couldn't ef I tried."

"Mebby yer won't be able ter hit er tall," was

the response to that. "Ef yer does, et wull be more'n Hard-fist Pete could do, an' we calls him no slouch. Don't go ter tellin' what ther delegate ar' made of till yer has tasted of him, mister, an' then yer will be quallefied ter judge, an' yer opine will be wu'th listenin' to. Git ready, now, ter salute ther delegate from Gray Shirt!"

CHAPTER XIII.

TELLS WHICH SIDE WHIPPED.

By this time the delegate from Gray Shirt was at hand.

It was Mr. Stiff, as lazy and weary as ever, now clad in gray shirt and accompanying rough raiment.

And as he came up, Red Shirt let itself loose in a whoop of laughter at his appearance. It was too much, such a specimen as this to think of getting away with such a man as Terror Ted.

That individual was the first to greet him.

"Mister," he spoke, mildly, "ain't thar some mistake?"

"How is that?" drawled Mr. Stiff. "Mistake about what, my good man?"

"Why, et can't be thet you ar' ther expected delegate from Gray Shirt, what's come over hyer ter larrup me."

"I guess there's no mistake about it," responded Mr. Stiff. "I'm here as the delegate from Gray Shirt, and my business is to whip the best man you can produce; or—get whipped."

The delegate had stopped, and was sitting with arms hanging, in as lazy an attitude as mortal could assume. He did not appear to have life enough in him to last him over till the same time next day. And to talk about fighting!

He was the object of general ridicule, and the crowd was making all manner of fun of him. Inviting him to get down and die; to stop breathing and take a rest, and any number of similar enticing things. And the delegate took it all mildly, seemingly too tired to resent.

Presently he looked around over the crowd, and demanded:

"Well, citizens of Red Shirt, I suppose you'll allow me to dismount and rest a little before the difficulty begins, won't you?"

"Ther wisest thing yer kin do," spoke up one man, "is ter turn yer hoss an' go right back ter Gray Shirt, straight, an' tell yer people yer got skart out."

"Not any," drawled the delegate. "When I go back it will be either as victor or vanquished. I can't go back without making a showing of some kind. But what say you: may I dismount?"

"Yes, you may dismount, sir," responded Fred Upworth, who had pushed through to the front, "and no one will offer to molest you. Stretch yourself a little, and then we will arrange for the meeting you have come here to seek."

"Thank you, sir," drawled the weary man.

He slipped out of the saddle, and requesting somebody to see to his horse, shambled toward the Bung-Hole.

A great part of the crowd followed him, and when he entered the saloon the place was speedily filled. He dropped upon a chair, stretched himself out, and for a time did nothing but rest.

Meanwhile the crowd surged around him, taking a survey of his appearance, and talking among themselves about the folly of his thinking of "doing up" Terror Ted.

That worthy was in the front part of the saloon, expressing himself in terms rather more forceful than elegant.

"Et looks like a shame," was one remark he offered. "I hate like sin ter do up sich a pore cuss ez he ar'."

Finally the delegate roused up, got upon his feet, and leaning against the bar, called out:

"Citizens of Red Shirt, hear me. It is time now to come to business, I suppose. What conditions are you willing to grant me?"

"You is entitled ter anything yer asks," declared Honest Jo, the proprietor of the saloon. "I reckon the boyees will give yer what yer asks, seein' as yours ar' a dead goose anyhow."

"Yas, yas, sot yer own terms," invited Terror Ted. "We kin afford ter humor ye, I reckon. We is inclined ter be good ter ye, out o' pity if nothin' else. You may be a fighter, but ef yer be yer looks tells a whoppin' lie, that's all."

"All I shall ask will be fair and square terms," the delegate drawled. "And then all I

want is to have the agreement lived up to. If you won't give your word to that, then there won't be any fight, that's all. What do you say on that head, citizens of Red Shirt?"

There was an immediate howl that he should have the fairest kind of a show. The idea of missing the fun was not to be thought of. The camp was ready to promise anything.

"Let us hear your conditions," demanded Fred Upworth.

"Well," was the lazy drawl, "they are these: That if I get whipped, I am to be sent back to Gray Shirt with proper care. If I come off victor, then I am to have the freedom of this camp for one week, to wear the gray shirt all the time, and to flap my wings and crow as long and loud as I please. How does that strike you?"

"That's all right," was the shout. "We 'grees ter them terms, an' we'll live up to 'em, too."

"I can ask nothing fairer. And now about the fight. I want you to pit your best man against me, so that one fight will decide. If I am going to be whipped, I want it done right up quick and brown. See?"

"An' I'm ther huckleberry what'll do et!" cried Terror Ted, waving his big arms wildly.

"Let's git at et, old hoss, fer I'm dyin' fer somethin' ter drink."

"All right, just as soon now as you please. Don't get excited."

"Excited! Me! Bless yer soul I don't often git excited, but when I do—Whew! When yer sees my ears begin ter flop, then I'm growin' excited."

"Then I'll keep my eye on your ears," said the delegate. "Now I'm ready, gentlemen, so go on with your arrangements, and as soon as I'm wanted let me know. I'll rest till I'm called."

Eager for the fun to begin, the citizens hustled to arrange the final details, and pretty soon the delegate was informed that he was wanted.

The crowd had formed a big ring in the street in front of the saloon, and in the ring stood the giant gladiator, hat and coat off, and the sleeves of his red shirt rolled up half way to the shoulder.

The sleepy delegate got up and shuffled out, and passed through the opening into the ring, the gap closing up behind him immediately.

Taking off his hat and dropping it to the ground, and then removing his spectacles and putting them in a pocket of his coat, and taking off the coat and passing it over to one of the men from Gray Shirt, he was ready.

"Git yerself up hyer, then," invited Terror Ted, "an' let me git one crack at yer, an' ef I don't take ther fight out of yer, I'm a liar."

"Well, here I am," drawled the delegate, as he shuffled up lazily and put up his hands. "Hit me hard, when you do hit me, and when I'm whipped, tell me, if I don't have sense enough to know it."

"Waal, yer is as good as licked already," declared Terror, "but et will be hard ter make yer believe that without ther proof ter back et, so hyer's ther proof. Look out fer yerself now, an' hyer's what's goin' ter send yer home disabled."

That ponderous right arm swung round, a terrific blow was delivered, and it hit—the air!

So heavy had it been that it almost carried the giant with it, and the delegate was out of the way.

Lifting his left fist, the delegate gave the bullwhacker a gentle reminder under the ear, a tap that caused him to bellow out in wild rage.

He pranced around furiously, calling the delegate all manner of pretty names, and evidently all because he had not stood still to receive the "nose-buster."

"Don't waste breath that way," the delegate advised. "You may need it before you get done."

"You'll need a coffin when I am done," was the vengeful retort. "By ther great hokus-pokus, but I'll kill yer this hyer time."

At the delegate he rushed again, this time putting on all steam, as it were, delivering two blows in quick succession, one with each fist. But no damage was done.

The sleepy delegate caught the blows with a swift clip on the forearm of each of the giant's pile-drivers, giving them a sensation akin to toothache, and making him howl with pain.

"Keep cool, Ted, keep cool!" called Fred Upworth. "If you lose your head you're done up, sure!"

"He's not excited till his ears begin to flop," drawled the delegate. "I am watching his ears. When they flop, then I'll be scared."

It was one thing to give the bullwhacker advice to keep cool, but it was altogether another

thing for him to follow it; and this taunt from the delegate drove him wild.

"I'll show yer whose ears will flop!" he vociferated. "I'll give yer somethin' ter carry home with yer! I'll wind ye up so's yer won't never come unwound, an' that I'm tellin' yer. Hyer I come, ter plow yer up! *Waugh!*"

If he thought to scare his opponent he was mistaken. The delegate was there, drowsy as ever in appearance, but he had proved that he was wide enough awake.

In rushed the terror, with head down and eyes closed, with the plain intention of getting hold of his antagonist. And in that he succeeded, though his hold was not exactly what he could have desired.

With a whoop of exultation he swung the delegate clear off his feet, and lifted him over his head. But it did not stop there. The delegate went on over, much against the bullwhacker's desire, and his feet struck the ground behind him!

And then up went Mr. Terror, with surprising ease, and was turned completely over, and allowed to come down upon his feet some distance away.

Had it been physically possible for him to "flop" his ears, they would have been "flopping" wildly now.

He stood and stared at his antagonist, his eyes flaming and his breast heaving.

The delegate looked as meek as a lamb, was as quiet as a zephyr, and as sleepy as ever. It did not seem possible that such a thing as the bullwhacker's toss had happened.

"Waal, I ber darn!" Terror Ted ejaculated. "I see thar is some fight in you, Mister Stiff, an' I'll have ter see what *science* kin do ergainst yer. Amble up hyer now, an' let me have another go at yer."

The delegate ambled, and their arms went up. The terror sparred for a moment, and then offered a feint, followed up immediately with a hard blow.

It ought to have been a success, but it wasn't. The delegate was out of the way, and in return he gave the bullwhacker a thump on the forehead that must have made him see stars.

"*Waugh!*" the gladiator bellowed. "*Waugh!* Yer life pays fer that aire clip, or I'm a stink-weed! I'm goin' fer yer scalplock this hyer time, an' don't yer fergit it! *Waugh!!*"

It was now or never, and the gladiator knew it.

He put forth every effort, pressing hard upon his antagonist and sending in blow after blow with lightning quickness.

But it was all of no use. The delegate parried every blow with even more ease than he had found it to avoid the blows of Hard-Fist Pete at Gray Shirt, and ere long Terror Ted began to grow weary.

Then it was that the delegate pushed the battle against him, hammering him around that ring in great style, not dealing very heavy blows, but stinging ones that raised a lump every time, and presently the fellow began to bellow for mercy.

"Hol' on! Hol' on!" he yelled. "I has enough, I has! I caves! I gives et up! You ar' ther best man, an' I don't keer who knows et! Let up, let up! Ow—*wow!* Fer ther luv o' goodness, hol' on! I has had all ther fight I bankers arter, an' you is ther cock of ther walk. Gray Shirt wins ther day, by darn!"

CHAPTER XIV.

DICK'S NEW DEAL.

THAT there was a "time" then may be believed.

Hisses and groans were heard on every side. The defeat of the great gladiator was signal and final.

The victim of his own misplaced confidence was a sight to behold. He held out well, taking punishment as long as he could stand it.

There was not a spot on his head and face that was not discolored. His eyes were fast closing, blood from his own nose was all over him, and he was teetotally done up and knocked out.

"Are you sure you have had all you want?" the lazy delegate asked.

"Yas, cuss yer! I is done up, an' I has got sense enough ter know et. I is licked, licked, fair an' square."

"No! no!" cried some one in the crowd. "We can't let Gray Shirt do us up that way, Ted! Go fer him again! Wax et to him! Down him an' chaw him! Climb on him!"

"Ef yer wants et done, do et yerselves," grunted the whipped man. "I tells yer I is done, an' I'm licked. Ef yer wants ter sample him, go fer him, but I wants no more in mine."

It was settled.

There was not a man there who could have whipped Ted, and to tackle the delegate would have been the worst of foolishness.

Groans were heard all around, and soon these were followed by murmurs that it had not been fair, and threats began to be whispered against the sleepy delegate.

Nor were these whispers in any wise hushed by the loud and victorious cheering that was being indulged in by the few men from Gray Shirt who were present. They were whooping themselves hoarse.

"None of that, now, good citizens," drawled the delegate, whose ears seemed to catch every whispered word. "Your promise was that I was to have the freedom of your camp for one week, to do pretty much as I please, and do all the crowing I want to."

"That is so, boys," spoke up young Upworth. "If our man has been whipped, let us keep our word. We can show these men from Gray Shirt that we are men of honor, anyhow. Ted says he is whipped, and whipped fair, and as he is the best man we can produce, it will have to stand so. What do you say, boys?"

At this, from Fred Upworth, the majority shouted approval, and soon it was agreed to all around.

This was the great point gained, and Deadwood Dick was now in the camp of the enemy, with a standing that was bound to be respected.

He was not done yet, however. He had one further point to play.

"Thank you, gentlemen," he drawled. "I felt sure that you would keep to your end of the bargain. And now, you men from Gray Shirt, carry the news to Mary as soon as you please!"

"You bet we will!" was the cry. "What's our horses? We'll go straight ter Gray Shirt, an' ef every galoot in ther camp don't drink to ther health of ther delegate, then I misses my guess."

They got their animals in short order, and pretty soon were off for home, carrying the glorious news of victory.

The delegate from Gray Shirt looked after them as they rode out of the valley, and as they disappeared he was heard to mutter to himself:

"Go it, you duffers; but you can't play me for a gilly again. If I had got killed here, it wouldn't have been any funeral of yours. If you see me at Gray Shirt again, let me know it, that's all."

"What is that you are saying, sir?" demanded Fred Upworth, who stood near.

"Did you overhear?" was the return.

"I believe I did."

"Well, I mean it. No more Gray Shirt for me."

"What are you going to do, then? Do you want to join us here, and be a wearer of the red?"

"I don't know how it will be. My plans are not settled. I may find it convenient to move on, before many moons. I'm a sort of drifter."

As he said this, the delegate gave a sly wink, and turning away, shambled toward the saloon.

Upworth looked after him a moment, and then started to overtake him.

"Say, a word with you," he said, laying a hand on his shoulder.

"As many as you want," was the easy return.

"Let's step off this way, and have a talk in private."

The delegate went with him, without question, and awaited his pleasure.

When they had got a little distance out of the crowd, Upworth stopped, and facing the tired stranger, said:

"You are not what you seem. You are in disguise. Don't deny it, now, for I am no fool. No man who can fight as you do would look so cussed lazy."

Mr. Stiff smiled.

"This is news to me," he drawled, smiling. "Maybe you can go further, and tell me who I am, if you believe that."

"And I can, too. You are Deadwood Dick, Junior!"

The delegate's face never changed a line, and his smile remained.

"That's news to me, too," he declared. "Anything further you know about me? Let me hear the worst; I guess I can stand it."

Upworth's face was a puzzle.

"Confound it, who are you?" he demanded, sharply.

The delegate laughed. He seemed to enjoy something immensely.

"The idea that I should be taken for Deadwood Dick!" he exclaimed. "But," and his face took on a serious expression, "what do you

know about Deadwood Dick? And why did you take me to be him?"

"Because I know Deadwood Dick is around here somewhere, and I'm looking for him to turn up."

"What! Deadwood Dick around here!"

So the delegate gasped, and he looked furtively around.

Fred Upworth's face looked puzzled again. What was this stranger, anyhow?

"You seem to have reason to fear Deadwood Dick," he observed. "Don't you care about meeting him?"

"Oh, nothing of that sort," the delegate nervously denied, "but I— I guess I'll take my horse and move out. I'm rather afraid your man Terror Ted will go for me behind my back, and—"

Now Upworth laughed.

"You can't blind me that way," he cried.

"It is Deadwood Dick you are afraid of."

"Oh, no," in a more lively tone than he had yet used; "what should I be afraid of him for? Who is he, anyhow? But, I think I'll be moving out."

"Look here, whoever you are," and Upworth laid a detaining hand on him, "you may as well own up, my man. I mean you well, and if you will make a clean breast to me I may be able to help you out."

Mr. Stiff looked at him keenly.

"It don't do to trust strangers," he said. "I think I'll slope off and go about my own business."

"But, one word first," detained the young man. "Tell me something about this Deadwood Dick, if you can, and describe him so that I would know him if I saw him. I am no fool, as I told you, and you can't blind me."

"Neither am I a fool," Mr. Stiff declared, "and if I had anything to tell it is not likely that I would unwind to a stranger. No; we can't deal. And I'm off as soon as I can get my horses."

This time he started in earnest, and Upworth had to go after him and detain him as before.

"See here," he said, "I have reason to look out for this Deadwood Dick. I can see it is the same with you. I have heard that he is somewhere around here, and I want to get hold of him. If you can help me I will make it worth your while."

Again that searching look.

"Do you mean that?" the delegate demanded.

"Yes, I mean it, every word. Let us understand each other."

"Well, I'll own up, but I warn you not to try any funny work. You have seen me fight, and I'd mash your face before you could wink. And I can shoot a little, too, so mind you don't try to fool me."

"On my word you can trust me."

"Well, then, I am in disguise, and I'm trying my best to keep out of the hands of this tireless detective, Deadwood Dick. He has tracked me inch by inch, for a thousand miles, and I've had on as many disguises. He is a terror, if all they say about him is true."

"But who are you?"

"Say, that's askin' too much. I won't tell you. A man don't have to put his neck in a— But, enough said."

This with another wink.

"You are just the man I want to help me," Upworth declared. "You know this Deadwood Dick by sight, and if you can help me put him out of the way it will be a good job for both of us."

"Do you see any green in my eye?" demanded the sleepy delegate—now awake to the fullest sense, drawing down his eyelid. "How do I know but that you are in cahoots with him? Let me go, and don't try to hold me. I'm off."

This seemed to have the desired effect.

Upworth threw aside all reserve, and showed his hand.

"One word more," he detained. "You are suspicious of me. Stay here till to-night, and let me prove to you that you are safer here in this town of Red Shirt than you can be anywhere else. I can put you in the way of making one of the fattest fortunes you ever dreamed about. And you are just the sort of man we want."

"If I thought this wasn't some game to trap me. You were so quick to see through my disguise, that—"

"You won't wonder at that, when you learn more about me. You remain here, and I'll prove what I assert. But what was your reason for declaring you wouldn't go back to Gray Shirt?"

"I should think you could guess that, too. They're not my kind over there. I like the ap-

pearance of things a good deal better here. It's too tony over there, and a fellow wouldn't have the backing, if he needed it."

"A fellow of your sort, eh? I should say not. This is the place where you want to locate, Mr. Stiff, and you had better declare your intentions and make yourself solid with the boys at once. Nothing would please them better than for you to become a Red Shirt."

"If I thought I could trust you—"

"Thunder! To-night we will put your mind easy on that score."

"Well, I'll do it and take chances. It isn't often I get fooled in a man, and you seem the right sort."

"You'll find that I am, you bet! Now come on and I'll tell the boys I have won you over, and we'll swear you in just as soon as you say so."

Conducting the ex-delegate back to where the crowd was still assembled, Upworth made a telling speech, informing them that the stranger had made up his mind to join hands with Red Shirt. And the finish of it was, that Deadwood Dick took upon himself allegiance to this camp, to the immense delight of all.

CHAPTER XV.

CLOSING THE CIRCLE.

It was soon night.

Dick was at the saloon, where he had remained.

He had played well his part. He seemed nervous, and had the appearance of being on the lookout for danger.

Fred Upworth had watched him a good deal of the time, and was satisfied that he was what he had intimated, a rascal who was keeping out of the clutches of the law.

The first part of the evening passed without any event worthy of note, and the time was running along toward midnight, when the sleepy-looking man of mystery was approached.

A man moved over to him, without drawing notice, and whispered:

"You are to follow me. There's no trick about this; cover me with a weapon if you want to, and at the first sign of treachery, plug me."

"All right," Mr. Stiff drawled. "I'll follow you, and don't forget that I will plug you, too, if any funny work is tried on with me. I can shoot just as well as I can fight."

The man moved away, and after a few moments went out.

Dick leisurely followed, and was led away from the camp toward the west.

Presently he came to a place where two horses were tied, and here his guide stopped.

"Climb your horse," he directed, "and we will be off. We have a few miles to go, but don't be alarmed. Keep me covered."

"You can bet your life I will," Mr. Stiff drawled. "If there is any monkey business about this, depend on my having a hand in it before it is done with."

Dick vaulted into the saddle with a spring straight from the ground, an impossible feat for a character such as he had been taking off; and his companion could but admire his agility.

As soon as they were mounted they were off. Dick close behind his guide, and carefully on the lookout for danger, though he hardly expected any treacherous move. He had every reason to believe they meant him well.

Finally, after a ride of perhaps three miles, over one of the worst trails Dick had ever crossed, they were challenged.

The leader responded, and they passed on, soon coming out into a small cup-shaped open.

Here were lights, and several masked men were standing around.

The guide sprung from his saddle; he was now masked like the others, and one of the group stepped forward to Dick.

"Welcome to the rendezvous of the Montana Marauders," he spoke, offering his hand. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am known as Iron John."

"Glad to meet you!" asserted Dick. And his lazy drawl was gone as by magic. "I tell you this is something like, boys!"

He gave the outlaw's hand a hearty shake, and then sprung from the saddle as lightly as an agile cowboy.

When Dick had shaken hands all around, then Iron John demanded:

"Now, stranger, before we go any further, let us know just who you are. Don't be afraid to trust us."

"You bet I won't!" Dick returned. "Did you ever hear of Rio Rex, the cattle-thief king?"

"No; we never did."

"Well, this is pretty far north, and I suppose

my fame hasn't reached here yet. That's who I am, anyhow. It got too mighty warm for me south, there, and so I'm taking a tour for my health. Hal hal ha!"

His laugh was so hearty as to convince all that he had spoken the truth.

"Well, how would you like to join the Montana Marauders?" asked the outlaw chief, bluntly.

"Nothing would suit me better," answered the detective, "but I will only do it on condition."

"Well, what's your condition? Give it a name, and we will consider it."

"It is this: That you will agree to defend me against that devil of a Deadwood Dick, who is hounding me to death!"

If anything had been wanting to assure the outlaws that the man was what he claimed, this remark supplied it. No further mistrust of the man was harbored by any.

Dick had been trying to recognize the voice of the leader, Iron John, but so far had failed. It was his suspicion that it was Fred Upworth, but, if so, he had a wonderful knack of changing his voice.

"Here's my hand on that!" exclaimed the chief, extending his hand again. "I will do that, willingly, and so will my men."

"You bet we will!" was the approving shout.

"Then I'm one of you, as soon as you say the word," agreed Dick.

"And we'll make you one of us at once."

Then followed much that need not be recorded here. Dick was made a member of the band, and was given the post of lieutenant—so called, by unanimous consent.

"Now," spoke the leader, when all had been finished, "do you know what would have been your fate, had you refused?"

"No; I don't know," Dick answered.

"You would never have left this basin alive. If you had refused, or had we found you to be a spy, it would have been death to you."

"If I had been a spy," Dick coolly argued, "it is not likely that I would have been fool enough to venture here. Those fellows generally want a full hand, and some over, before they play."

Dick's same guide returned with him to Red Shirt, and by the time they reached there the camp was in darkness. Captain Iron John had not revealed his identity, and the only man of them all whom Dick knew anything about, thus far, was this one who had been his guide.

Entrance to the hotel was had easily enough, and Dick sought his room.

Later, a dark form stole out, went in the direction of the rock shelf in the rear, and presently signal communication was being held with the Domino Doubles!

Next day Dick lounged around the camp, as lazy and sleepy as ever, though now a Red Shirt and to the manner born. He was the same Mr. Stiff, with hardly enough ambition to keep from being in his own way.

He was paying attention to everything, while seeming to be observing little or nothing. And his interest was in a measure centered upon the cabin occupied by the strange young woman who had been his fellow-passenger on the stage. Without drawing attention, he watched her every move.

Nor was this all. He seemed to take a particular interest in Fred Upworth, and several others of the prominent characters of the camp. Nothing escaped his observation, while, as it seemed, nothing could excite the least degree of interest in him. Yet with all this, he had the air of one constantly apprehending danger.

News of his turning traitor to Gray Shirt had reached that camp, and great was the indignation it aroused.

It would have been as good as a death-warrant, almost, for him to have showed his head there again.

He made himself at home around the Bung-Hole, having won the admiration, and perforce, the respect, of the urbane proprietor, Honest Jo; and the freedom of the whole house was his.

He had already made friends with old Dinah, the colored cook, and could invade her precinct whenever he desired.

Late in the afternoon he paid a visit there, for some apparently simple purpose, and engaged the old negress in an earnest conversation.

It is hardly necessary to repeat what was said, or even to give a synopsis, for the reader can readily guess the import of the interview. Suffice it to say that Dinah was interested.

In the evening when her work was done, the negress paid a visit to the cabin occupied by the mysterious young woman, and what passed

between them could not have been detected by the keenest of ears outside the cabin walls. Plots and counter-plots were in progress evidently.

Several days passed without any exciting event worthy of note.

During that time, however, much advance had been made by the Lion-hearted Richard.

He had detected every member of the outlaw band, was in the secret of all the plans they had laid for future operations, and had them in his power!

The mysterious young woman, whose name had been learned to be Lily Langdon, had made the acquaintance of Fred Upworth, and they were much in each other's company.

Both were playing shrewd games, and both playing well their parts. On her part, the young woman was enacting a role suited to the arrangements made between her and the old negress, and which Upworth had overheard and knew all about.

He, in turn, was falling into the scheme, lending himself to her designs with apparent unconsciousness of what her intentions were. It was her purpose now to allay his suspicion, and disarm his mistrust, if he had any; and then to bring about something of which the rogue little suspected.

Upworth, on the other hand, again, was willing to play the dupe, falling into the trap he had heard planned, having back of it all another design, which he had no idea could in any manner become known to the object of his evil intentions, the lady herself; but through the watchful Dick, she was fully aware of everything, and lent herself to his plans freely.

The telegraphic signals had been kept up, almost nightly, and the wonderful light on the distant mountain had become a thing of greatest mystery, calling forth wondering comments of every sort. If it kept on, an expedition was going to be sent out some night to find what it meant.

Thanks to the formation of the rocky shelf nearer at home, under which the camp rested, almost, the responding light could not be detected, and the truth of the matter was not guessed. Then, too, with every eye fixed upon the distant light, no other was looked for.

Pretty soon came some mysterious and strangely unaccountable disappearances. Two or three citizens of Red Shirt were missing, and no one could account for their absence, or even make a reasonable guess as to what had become of them. They were simply gone; that was all.

At Gray Shirt, too, one disappearance was reported, that of Bob Dickens, the fancy and highly popular clerk of the Hotel Royal. When he had gone, how, where to, and why, were questions unanswerable.

Most wonderful of all, though known only to a certain few, was that each of these disappearances removed summarily a member of the Montana Marauders. That band was alarmed.

Presently, one morning, Red Shirt awoke to find the camp placarded with printed notices, mysterious to some but plain enough to others.

They were all alike, and the following is a copy of the wording:

"TO THE CAMP OF RED SHIRT, PUBLIC NOTICE:—
"You are harboring a nest of vipers. The headquarters of the Montana Marauders is in your midst. Let Iron John and his pirate crew tremble, for the sword of vengeance is bared. A few have been dealt with; all the rest are doomed. We mean business!"

(Signed) "THE PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE,
"The Domino Doubles of Gray Shirt."

Needless to say, the greatest excitement followed, and more than one man in that camp trembled in his boots. Again did Mr. Stiff begin to exhibit a desire to move out and seek a clime more conducive to good health and longevity.

CHAPTER XVI.

WINDING UP THE BUSINESS.

MIDNIGHT found the Montana Marauders at their rendezvous.

All were masked, and their manner was serious. Matters of moment were to be considered.

The great question was: what is going to be done? They had lost five men in all, and only five remained, including "Rio Rex," the man from the Texas border.

He seemed the most excited of any. He declared it must be Deadwood Dick who was at the bottom of it, for it was just like his work. And he was for getting out as speedily as possible.

But Iron John would not hear of that. He was a member of the band, and had to take his chances with the rest. But just what ought to

be done was hard to decide. A scheme had been planned for the robbing of the Gray Shirt stage a few days later, to capture the bullion from the Last Chance.

Now that had to be abandoned, for they were afraid to undertake carrying it out. They were at a loss what to do, and finally the opinion of the new member was unanimously called for.

He gave it as his opinion that the members of the band had better remain exceedingly quiet, and do nothing that could possibly draw suspicion upon any one.

Not that he had any idea who they all were, he added, but he considered that the only really safe plan.

But for some reason this did not quite suit Iron John. He had a scheme on hand that must be carried out. And in it he would need the help of his men, or, at any rate, some of them.

What that scheme was he did not then explain, but said he would make it known when the time was ripe for carrying it out. In the mean time the suggestion of the man from Texas was the best that could be done. And with that understanding, and some further planning, they separated.

Another day or two passed, and finally another member of the band was missing. This time it was Rio Rex, and the lazy and sleepy Mr. Stiff was seen no more at Red Shirt, neither was he seen again at all.

Yet another day or two passed by, and by this time the friendly relation between Fred Upworth and the young woman who occupied Garry Long's cabin had become very marked.

Miss Langdon had made a purchase of a horse, and Upworth was her escort whenever she went for exercise out of the camp.

One afternoon she sent for him, making a request for his company upon a little excursion she desired to make.

She had been out alone, she explained, and had visited a point that she wished to visit again for the purpose of making a sketch. By the way, she was handy with the pencil, and sketching was her chief occupation.

The young man agreed immediately and they set out forthwith, and on the way the young woman's conversation never flagged a moment.

Their destination was finally reached, and, drawing rein, the young woman's manner changed, and pointing to the outline of a grave by the side of the trail, she exclaimed:

"Fred Upworth, tell me who lies there?"

"Why, really, how should I know?" the young man asked, pretending greatest amazement.

"You speak a lie!" the young woman cried. "There lies the body of poor Mazie Lang, whom you ruined! And I—I am her sister, Lily Lang!"

"Yo' jes' bet dat am de fack!" cried another voice, and the head and shoulders of old Dinah appeared above a bowlder, presenting a rifle aimed at the man's breast; "an' yo' jes' put up yo' han's, mighty soon, or down yo' goes!"

"This—this must be all a mistake!" Upworth gasped, putting up his hands promptly. "I—I know nothing about this, Miss Langdon. What do you mean? It is all a great puzzle to me."

"You wretch!" was the cry. "You know it is true. My name is not Langdon, but Lang, and I am here to avenge my sister's wrongs and death. We are going to hang you, and do it here and now! Shoot him, Dinah, if he moves!"

"But the proof," the fellow gasped, in pretending fright. "Surely you will not lynch me without proof, will you? What proof have you that I am the person you suppose?"

"The best of proof," was the answer. "We have the old woman who was your servant when my sister was in your power. She is ready to swear to it all."

For a second the man's face paled, but soon a smile spread over his features, and at that instant strong hands seized the old negress from behind, and she was disarmed—masked men dashing out at the same time and making a prisoner of the young woman.

"Hal hal ha!" Upworth laughed. "What an easy thing it is to be mistaken. I fancy the tables are turned, my pretty Lily. Your sister was a beauty, but you are far prettier, and I have no objections to taking you under my protecting care. Bind them, men, and bring them along!"

The negress and the young woman screamed, then cried, and acted as though frightened out of their wits. All this was not unexpected to them; but, had it been, their actions could not have been more real.

They were soon bound, horses were brought, and the whole party set off through a defile of

the mountains for the rendezvous of the outlaws.

But there a surprise awaited them of which they little dreamed.

They entered the basin, and at first there was nothing to arouse suspicion.

It was their intention to remain there till dark, when Upworth, who was, as Deadwood Dick had rightly guessed, Iron John, intended to take his fair prisoner to a secret cabin still further away.

They dismounted, and were all unsuspecting of danger, when, suddenly, yells were heard around them, immediately followed by the ringing order—

"Hands up!"

The rascals sprung up, alarmed—bewildered. Surrounding them were seven masked men, each with a brace of revolvers to the fore.

That they were men of Gray Shirt their color proclaimed, and upon the breast of each was a symbol that proclaimed more. They were the Domino Doubles!

"Iron John," spoke the Double-Six, "your little game is up. You are our prisoners, and the least resistance will mean certain and sudden death to the man who offers it. Hands up, every one!"

"Never!" cried the chief, and he reached for his weapons, his men doing the same. Well they knew what capture meant for them.

But they were balked in what they intended. Two of the Dominoes fired, and two of the outlaws fell dead, while Deadwood Dick and the others sprung forward and captured the remaining two, Dick taking Iron John unaided.

Their cursings and ravings availing them nothing, then they begged to be let go, swearing they would clear out immediately and never be seen again.

"It won't do, Fred Upworth," said Dick, snatching the mask from his face. "I have other use for you."

"Who are you?" the baffled outlaw chief cried.

Dick took off his mask.

"I am Deadwood Dick, at your service!" he announced. "I have been known to you as Mr. Stiff, the sleepy delegate from Gray Shirt; or, better, as Rio Rex, the exile from Texas!"

"Curses on you!" the baffled villain cried. "I wish I had known it before, you would not be here to-day!"

"If you had discovered it, and attempted to remove me, you might possibly not have been here yourself, on this auspicious occasion. It is hard to tell. Come, let's mount and away."

The dead were thrown over the backs of their horses and tied fast, the living were made to mount and securely bound, and when the place had been sacked of everything worth taking, they set out for the rendezvous of the Domino Doubles.

Arriving there, Iron John was introduced to the others of his band who had disappeared, and who had been made prisoners by Deadwood Dick's Dominoes and imprisoned there, awaiting the final grand coup.

These prisoners now were brought out and mounted, and, led by the Domino Doubles, the cavalcade set out for Gray Shirt, in the early evening hours.

A whole chapter could not do justice to the excitement their arrival there created. The camp fairly went wild. And when it became known who Deadwood Dick was, and the parts he had played, then Gray Shirt let itself loose in earnest to do justice to the great occasion.

Let us pass it over without further words or attempt at description.

Next day came the trial.

The outlaws were found guilty, and were sentenced to be hanged.

And there was no intention of delaying that final ceremony, but, brief as the time was, it was long enough for Fred Upworth, Bob Dickens, and one other to find escape from their impending fate by suicide.

The others were run up, and when Red Shirt was made aware of what had happened, the whole business had ended. Great excitement, of course, followed. The two camps arrayed themselves in arms against each other, and it looked as though there would be a war on a small scale.

That was averted, however, and after a day the excitement cooled off a little. At Gray Shirt it was the verdict that Red Shirt was about as bad as the outlaws, but it was shown that the camp as a whole knew nothing about the band. It was a surprise to both camps. Besides Fred Upworth and Bob Dickens, the band had consisted of men from each camp, all well known.

Upworth, senior, made a hasty departure from Red Shirt, taking his family with him, and it was believed that he had had more of a hand in his son's doings than had been suspected. Where he went no one knew, and no one took the trouble to find out. The Good Luck Mine was proven to be quite worthless, and it was supposed that it had been kept up only by means of what was stolen from the Last Chance Mine at Gray Shirt. The mine closed, the camp soon died a natural death and so passed out of history, and no more need be said of it here.

Deadwood Dick, with a good-by to all, took his leave.

Time wrought changes at Gray Shirt, for Walt Maybree loved and eventually married Lily Lang.

Old Dinah is with them, happy to be with the mistress she loves, and never tires of telling about her sojourn at Red Shirt.

Gray Shirt, by the way, has now a more pompous name; for Red Shirt out of the way, the old residents agreed that such a name for a growing town was not desirable.

The work of the Domino Doubles done, they disbanded, of course. They had done a good service to the country round about and one that will long be remembered by the old citizens.

It was Deadwood Dick's intention to return immediately to San Francisco, where he had left his bride of a week, but circumstances conspired against him. What these circumstances were, another story must declare.

THE END.

Beadle's Half-Dime Library.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER.

Deadwood Dick Novels.

- 1 Deadwood Dick, the Prince of the Road.
- 20 Deadwood Dick's Defiance; or, Double Daggers.
- 28 Deadwood Dick in Disguise; or, Buffalo Ben.
- 35 Deadwood Dick in His Castle.
- 42 Deadwood Dick's Bonanza; or, The Phantom Miner.
- 49 Deadwood Dick in Danger; or, Omaha Oil.
- 57 Deadwood Dick's Eagles; or, The Parads of Flood Bar.
- 75 Deadwood Dick on Deck; or, Calamity Jane, the Heroine.
- 77 Deadwood Dick's Last Act; or, Corduroy Charlie.
- 104 Deadwood Dick in Leadville.
- 104 Deadwood Dick's Deceit; or, The Double Cross Sign.
- 109 Deadwood Dick as Detective.
- 129 Deadwood Dick's Double; or, The Gorgon's Gulch Ghost.
- 138 Deadwood Dick's Home Base; or, Blonde Bill.
- 149 Deadwood Dick's Big Strike; or, A Game of Gold.
- 156 Deadwood Dick of Deadwood; or, The Picked Party.
- 195 Deadwood Dick's Dream; or, The Rivals of the Road.
- 201 Deadwood Dick's Ward; or, The Black Hill's Jezebel.
- 205 Deadwood Dick's Doom; or, Calamity Jane's Adventure.
- 217 Deadwood Dick's Dead Deal.
- 221 Deadwood Dick's Death Plant.
- 232 Gold-Dust Dick, A Romance of Roughs and Toughs.
- 238 Deadwood Dick's Divide; or, The Spirit of Swamp Lake.
- 268 Deadwood Dick's Death Trail.
- 309 Deadwood Dick's Deal; or, The Gold Brick of Oregon.
- 321 Deadwood Dick's Dozen; or, The Fakir of Phantom Flats.
- 347 Deadwood Dick's Duets; or, Days in the Diggings.
- 351 Deadwood Dick Sentenced; or, The Terrible Vendetta.
- 362 Deadwood Dick's Claim.
- 405 Deadwood Dick in Dead City.
- 410 Deadwood Dick's Diamonds.
- 421 Deadwood Dick in New York; or, A "Cute Case."
- 430 Deadwood Dick's Dust; or, The Chained Hand.
- 443 Deadwood Dick, Jr.
- 448 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Defiance.
- 458 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Full Hand.
- 459 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Big Round-Up.
- 465 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Racket at Claim 10.
- 471 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Corral; or, Bozeman Bill.
- 476 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Dog Detective.
- 481 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Deadwood.
- 491 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Compact.
- 496 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Inheritance.
- 500 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Diggings.
- 508 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Deliverance.
- 515 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Protegee.
- 522 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Three.
- 529 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Danger Ducks.
- 534 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Death Hunt.
- 539 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Texas.
- 544 Deadwood Dick, Jr. the Wild West Vidocq.
- 549 Deadwood Dick, Jr. on His Mettle.
- 554 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Gotham.
- 561 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Boston.
- 567 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Philadelphia.
- 572 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Chicago.
- 578 Deadwood Dick, Jr. Afloat.
- 584 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Denver.
- 590 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Decree.
- 595 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Beelzebub's Basin.
- 600 Deadwood Dick, Jr. at Coney Island.
- 606 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Leadville Lay.
- 612 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Detroit.
- 618 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Cincinnati.
- 624 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Nevada.
- 630 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in No Man's Land.
- 636 Deadwood Dick, Jr. After the Queer.
- 642 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Buffalo.
- 648 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Chase Across the Continent.
- 654 Deadwood Dick, Jr. Among the Smugglers.
- 660 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Insurance Case.
- 666 Deadwood Dick, Jr. Back in the Mines.
- 672 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in Durango; or, "Gathered In."
- 678 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Discovery; or, Found a Fortune.
- 684 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Dazzle.
- 690 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Dollars.
- 695 Deadwood Dick, Jr. at Danger Divide.
- 700 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Drop.
- 704 Deadwood Dick, Jr. at Jack-Pot.
- 710 Deadwood Dick, Jr. in San Francisco.
- 716 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Still Hunt.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

- 7 The Flying Yankee; or, The Ocean Outcast.
- 17 Ralph Roy, the Boy Buccaneer; or, The Fugitive Yacht.
- 24 Diamond Dirk; or, The Mystery of the Yellowstone.
- 62 The Shadow Ship; or, The Rival Lieutenants.
- 75 The Boy Dnelli; or, The Cruise of the Sea-Wolf.
- 102 Dick Dead-Eye, the Boy Smuggler.
- 111 The Sea-Devil; or, The Midshipman's Legacy.
- 116 The Hussar Captain; or, The Hermit of Hell Gate.
- 197 Little Grit; or, Bessie, the Stock-Tender's Daughter.
- 204 Gold Plume; or, Buffalo Bill, the Pony Express Rider.
- 216 Blson Bill, the Prince of the Reins; or, Buffalo Bill's Pluck.
- 222 Grit, the Bravo Sport; or, The Woman Trailer.
- 229 Crimson Kate; or, The Cowboy's Triumph.
- 237 Lone Star, the Cowboy Captain.
- 245 Merle, the Middy; or, The Freelance Heir.
- 250 The Midshipman Mutineer; or, Brandt, the Buccaneer.
- 264 The Floating Feather; or, Merle Monte's Treasure.
- 269 The Gold Ship; or, Merle, the Condemned.
- 276 Merle Monte's Cruise; or, "The Gold Ship" Chase.
- 280 Merle Monte's Fate; or, Pearl, the Pirate's Bride.
- 284 The Sea Marauder; or, Merle Monte's Pledge.
- 287 Billy Blue-Eyes, the Boy Rover of the Rio Grande.
- 304 The Dead Shot Dandy; or, Benito, the Boy Bugler.
- 308 Keno Kit; or, Dead Shot Dandy's Double.
- 314 The Mysterious Marauder; or, The Boy Bugler's Trail.
- 377 Bonodel, the Boy Rover; or, The Flagless Schooner.
- 383 The Indian Pilot; or, The Search for Pirate Island.
- 387 Warpath Will, the Boy Phantom.
- 393 Seawolf, the Boy Lieutenant.
- 402 Isodor, the Young Conspirator; or, The Fatal League.
- 407 The Boy Insurgent; or, The Cuban Vendetta.
- 412 The Wild Yachtsman; or, The War-Cloud's Cruise.
- 429 Duncan Dare, the Boy Refugee.
- 433 A Cabin Boy's Luck; or, The Corsair.
- 437 The Sea Raider.
- 441 The Ocean Firefly; or, A Middy's Vengeance.
- 446 Haphazard Harry; or, The Scapegrace of the Sea.
- 450 Wizard Will; or, The Boy Ferret of New York.
- 454 Wizard Will's Street Scouts.
- 462 The Born Guide; or, The Sailor Boy Wanderer.
- 468 Neptune Ned, the Boy Coaster.
- 474 Flora; or, Wizard Will's Vagabond Pard.
- 483 Ferrets Afloat; or, Wizard Will's Last Case.
- 487 Nevada Ned, the Revolver Ranger.
- 495 Arizona Joe, the Boy Pard of Texas Jack.
- 497 Buck Taylor, King of the Cowboys.
- 508 The Royal Middy; or, The Shark and the Sea Cat.
- 507 The Hunted Midshipman.
- 511 The Outlawed Middy.
- 520 Buckskin Bill, the Comanche Shadow.
- 525 Brothers in Buckskin.
- 530 The Buckskin Bowers.
- 535 The Buckskin Rovers.
- 540 Captain Ku-Klux, the Marauder of the Rio.
- 545 Lieutenant Leo, the Son of Laftie.
- 550 Laftie's Legacy; or, The Avenging Son.
- 555 The Creole Corsair.
- 560 Pawnee Bill, the Prairie Shadower.
- 565 Kent Kingdom, the Card King.
- 570 Camille, the Card Queen.
- 575 The Surgeon-Scout Detective.
- 580 The Outcast Cadet; or, The False Detective.
- 586 The Buckskin Avenger.
- 591 Delmonte, the Young Sea Rover.
- 597 The Young Texan Detective.
- 602 The Vagabond of the Mines.
- 607 The Rover Detective; or, Keno Kit's Champions.
- 617 Ralph, the Dead-Shot Scout; or, The Rio Raiders.
- 644 The Hercules Highwayman.
- 650 Butterfly Billy, the Pony Rider Detective; or, Buffalo Bill's Boy Pard.
- 656 Butterfly Billy's Man Hunt.
- 662 Butterfly Billy's Bonanza.
- 668 The Buccaneer Midshipman.
- 674 The Wizard Sailor; or, Red Ralph, the Rover.
- 679 The Sea Shadower; or, The Freebooter's Legacy.
- 686 Orlando, the Ocean Free Flag; or, The Tarnished Name.
- 692 The Rival Sharps; or, Redfern, the Secret Service Scout.
- 697 The Scarlet Sombbrero; or, The Sharp from Texas.
- 702 Blue Jacket Bill; or, The Red Hat Rangers' Red Hot Racket.
- 707 The Red Sombbrero Rangers; or, Redfern's Last Trail.

BY BUFFALO BILL (Hon. Wm. F. Cody).

- 3 Kansas King; or, The Red Right Hand.
- 19 The Phantom Spy; or, The Pilot of the Prairie.
- 55 Deadly-Eye, the Unknown Scout.
- 68 Border Robin Hood; or, The Prairie Rover.
- 158 Fancy Frank of Colorado; or, The Trapper's Trust.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.

- 2 Yellowstone Jack; or, The Trapper.
- 48 Black John, the Road-Agent; or, The Outlaw's Retreat.
- 65 Hurricane Bill; or, Mustang Sam and His Pard.
- 119 Mustang Sam; or, The King of the Plains.
- 136 Night-Hawk Kit; or, The Daughter of the Ranch.
- 144 Dainty Lance, the Boy Sport.
- 151 Panther Paul; or, Dainty Lance to the Rescue.
- 160 The Black Giant; or, Dainty Lance in Jeopardy.
- 163 Deadly Dash; or, Fighting Fire with Fire.
- 184 The Boy Trailers; or, Dainty Lance on the War-Path.
- 203 The Boy Pard; or, Dainty Lance Unmasked.
- 211 Crooked Cale, the Caliban of Celestial City.
- 310 The Barranca Wolf; or, The Beautiful Decoy.
- 319 The Black Rider; or, The Horse-Thieves' League.
- 335 Old Double Fist; or, The Strange Guide.
- 355 The King of the Woods; or, Daniel Boone's Last Trail.
- 449 Kit Fox, the Border Boy Detective.
- 625 Chincapin Dan, the Boy Trailer.
- 677 Chincapin Dan's Second Trail.
- 688 Chincapin Dan's Home Stretch.
- 698 Old Crazy, the Man Without a Head.
- 708 Light-Heart Lute's Legacy.

LATEST AND NEW ISSUES.

- 713 Carl, the Mad Cowboy; or, The Lariat Queen. By Col. Prentiss Ingraham.
- 714 Old Misery, the Man from Missouri; or, The Mystery of the Mountain League. By Wm. G. Patten.
- 715 Wide Awake Len, the Quaker City Ferret; or, Caging the Cornorant. By T. C. Harbaugh.
- 716 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Still Hunt; or, The Second Round in San Francisco. By Edward L. Wheeler.
- 717 Mosquito Jack, the Hustler Gamini; or, Move-on Mike's Grand Catch. By Jo Pierce.
- 718 Light-Heart Lute's Last Trail; or, The Gold Crater's Secret. By Joseph E. Badger, Jr.
- 719 Pawnee Bill's Pledge; or, The Cowboy Kidnapper. By Col. Prentiss Ingraham.
- 720 Broadway Billy's Full Hand; or, The Gamin Detective's Double Snap at Santa Fe. By J. C. Cowdrick.
- 721 Maverick Mose, the Arizona Detective; or, The Wizard of Urkos Pass. By Will Lisenbee.
- 722 Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Dominoes; or, The Rival Camps of the Northern Border. By Edward L. Wheeler.
- 723 Silverblade, the Shoshone; or, The Border Beagle's Secret Mission. By Jos. E. Badger, Jr.
- 724 Violet Vane's Vengeance; or, The Wipe-Out at White Water. By William G. Patten.

A New Issue Every Tuesday.

The Half-Dime Library is for sale by all newsdealers, five cents per copy, or sent by mail on receipt of six cents each.

BEADLE AND ADAMS, Publishers,
98 William Street, New York.

TWO REMARKABLE HEROES.

The Deadwood Dicks, Senior and Junior, are the Gentlemen.

There Have Already Been Eighty Volumes Published Relating to Their Astounding Courage, Coolness and Skill.

In only one sense of the word can it be regarded as a novel statement when the fact is here recorded that literature has given many heroes to the world, and perhaps more than one reader will have to think a moment over this remark before the subtle delicacy of its genial wit strikes home.

But it is most essentially a half dime novel statement that will be news to many when it is added that literature, if traced from the dimly distant days when Adam was a mere child down to the present day, would show but few heroes that in the eyes of boyhood would be even judged worthy of comparison with the two greatest heroes known to American literature, or, to promptly reveal them, Deadwood Dick and Deadwood Dick, Jr.

Perhaps if everything were known of his career in bookland, Robinson Crusoe would rank above any hero ever offered to the boys of the world, for Robinson made his appearance a long time ago and his adventures have been translated into pretty nearly all the languages that are printable; but while Robinson is and ever will be a worthy personage, he is, it is to be feared, most decidedly a back number in the eyes of several millions of the boys and young men of to-day.

And then, too, Robinson's reputation was made and safely anchored to leeward at a time when competition in the manufacture of heroes of juvenile literature was so slack that it is scarcely worth mentioning. Had he postponed his debut until to-day, Robinson would have had to hire a press agent, of the very objectionable type known as a hustler, and even with that assistance the odds are that he would have experienced a severe frost.

Robinson, like many other bygone characters calculated to thrill the juvenile mind, labored under the disadvantage of having only a comparatively few adventures, and he was further very heavily handicapped by having to confine his adventures within the narrow circles of probability and common sense. The modern heroes of fiction for young America, who are now as countless as the sands of the sea, and of whom the Deadwood Dicks are much the most important, are not trammelled by any such confined conditions, and with the bars let down admitting them to the boundless expanse of the utterly impossible, it is but natural that their unnaturalness should bear away the palm of popularity, and such as Robinson be left far behind in the race.

Therefore the statement of the surpassing prominence of the two Deadwood Dicks having been so emphatically made, it will be as well to justify the emphasis with some facts about their history from a bookseller's point of view, before plunging into the seething vortex of their recorded lives.

Deadwood Dick made his first appearance before the public in 1877, under the auspices of Beadle & Adams, the William street publishers of popular literature for the masses, and for fourteen years he or his son has been reappearing at intervals, which were at first irregular, but they have now settled down to a basis of once in six weeks.

It was in 1885 that Deadwood Dick the elder made his final appearance after thirty-three volumes of adventure, and his son, Deadwood Dick, Jr., who had been growing up in them for many years, took up the running, and has kept it up to the tune of very nearly fifty volumes more in the six years that have passed since his remarkable father was buried.

During the fourteen years they have been on the market these stories have been sold at five cents a volume, and the circulation they have attained throughout the length and breadth of the land, has been in the aggregate something truly vast, for the entire series is kept constantly in print, and many of the early issues are now enjoying a sale of their twenty-seventh or thirtieth edition.

It can be easily believed, therefore, that the two Dicks are so firmly engrafted on the tree of popular literature for boys and young men, that their position is assured so long as their author can keep it up, and that they stand to-day head and shoulders above all rivals in the eyes of the public for which they have lived, and for which one of them has died.

American boyhood, and that is a tremendous factor in the land, now knows Deadwood Dick, Jr., a good deal better than it knows its catechism, and millions of young minds absorb the thrilling incidents of his career in his everlasting warfare against crime and his never-ending solving of impenetrable mysteries.

Millions of boys follow his stealthy footsteps as he tracks his vicious victims to their undoing, and then, when the victims are thoroughly undone, the millions wait hungrily for the next volume, which on every sixth Tuesday appears with the certainty of the Tuesday itself, and a new set of delightful thrills go thrilling away from Maine to California.

Mr. Victor, the courteous editor for Beadle and Adams, who told *The Evening Sun* what it wished to know about the history of the two Dicks, said that he had often had his attention called to what

are known as Deadwood Dick clubs, which are organizations consisting of from three to a dozen boys, who take turns in buying the Deadwood Dick novels as they appear, and reading them in rotation, so that in the case, for instance, of a club of six members, each member would be kept thoroughly informed of his pet hero's latest doings, at a cost of only five cents once in thirty-six weeks, while when nine of these economical young enthusiasts pool their issues in the same direction a nickel will serve the purpose for a whole year.

Mr. Victor, in his curious and interesting task of editing this phase of the literature of the day for one of the most extensive publishing houses in the business, has weighed the question carefully, and finds that a volume once in six weeks is just about the amount of Deadwood Dick, Jr., that his countless admirers can comfortably absorb and digest.

In England, too, this extraordinary series of eighty volumes telling of the doings of father and son has been republished for years, to the infinite delight of the boys and youths of Great Britain and the solid satisfaction of the London publishers that had the pleasure of thus getting square with America on the piracy question.

"When I received the first Deadwood Dick story," said Mr. Victor, "I was struck with the freshness of the author's style, and after tining it down a little sent it to the printers. The story made a hit and I accepted another and another until we found that the character was becoming unusually popular among our patrons."

"I kept urging the author to make the stories less terrifically forcible in the language of his rougher characters, and gradually the sulphurous nature of their dialogues became moderate enough to need but little editing, and at the same time the torrents of liquor that flowed like rivers through his earlier manuscripts, dwindled to rivulets under the influence of my appeals for less run."

"The author urged the absolute truth of both the language and the amount of whisky-drinking that he attributed to his characters, but I begged in the interests of morality that the flow of both one and the other be curbed, and of course the stories were none the worse for his doing so."

"Deadwood Dick, himself, was also gradually reformed and changed from the outlawed terror of the law-abiding to the deadly foe of the law breakers, and when once that transformation was achieved his subsequent course in the path of virtue was an assured success."

"True, the path was a somewhat rocky, bloody and dangerous one; but no one who follows him along its various ups and downs can doubt its virtue, and from that virtue he never deviated."

The full and official list of the titles of this remarkable series would fill at least a column of *The Evening Sun*. It contains some real gems in the way of names calculated to attract the youth in search of a thrill. For instance there is Deadwood Dick's Device; or, The Sign of the Double Cross. A Wild, Strange Tale of the Leadville Mines—of Men of Steel—of Toughs and Tigers—of Road-agents, Regulators, Avengers, Adventurers, and of the Thrilling Life in the New Eldorado.

Can any one deny the comprehensiveness of that or his probable power of seducing nickels from the pockets of novel-reading boys? Then there are a number of delightfully alliterative titles, such as Deadwood Dick's Defiance, or, the Double Daggers, and Deadwood Dick's Double, or, the Ghost of Gurgon's Gulch. Peculiarly fetching, too, in their forceful effect on the small boy's pocket money must be Deadwood Dick on Deck; or, Calamity Jane, the Heroine of Whooop Up; Deadwood Dick's Dead Deal; or, Captain Crackshot, the Girl Brigand; Deadwood Dick's Death Trail; Deadwood Dick's Death Plant, and Deadwood Dick's Diamonds. In the selection of localities for his adventures Deadwood Dick, Jr., shows far more desire for variety than the old man ever did, for he has volumes that relate his remarkable doings in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Cincinnati, Rochester, Buffalo, San Francisco, Denver, Galveston, Leadville, and even at Coney Island. The titles of the younger hero's volumes show that he met with and got the better of swindlers, bunco men, counterfeiters, bank robbers, horse thieves, smugglers, pirates, stage robbers, and, indeed, pretty nearly every sort of criminal known to the police, while his father confined himself almost exclusively to rooting out the Western type of bad men. Progress has, therefore, a worthy representative in Deadwood Dick the younger.

It is surely not necessary to add that in the moderate compass of a newspaper article, only the merest shadow of justice can be done to the careers of any heroes that have had such an extraordinary collection of stories as that written about them. If a month or so were given to a careful reader for the task, he might, with the assistance of a double-entry bookkeeper, tabulate the number of blood-curdling episodes that occur in the eighty volumes, together

with the exact number of persons who are shot, stabbed, hanged and removed in sundry less conventional borderland ways, such as being tossed into quicksands, burned in the tops of forest giants, fed to bears or made to try and walk on tight ropes across bottomless chasms.

The final summary would be something appalling in its gory magnitude, and would form a record of slaughter that would shame the battle of Gettysburg, but it might prove a source of entertainment to some idle person of a sanguinary turn of mind, and so the idea is suggested here.

The variety of duels in these stories is another source of wonder to the reader, and it must be acknowledged that Mr. Wheeler has as prolific an imagination as it is possible to conceive. Every volume of the series fairly bristles with episodes of a nature that makes those related in the more ordinary 10-cent or 5-cent stories seem as mild as hotel milk, and hotel milk has been pronounced by scientists to be the mildest object in nature.

In coming face to face with the notes of a variety of episodes and adventures in the books which the writer made as he hurriedly went through the eighty volumes, and which he hoped to utilize in this article, an overpowering sense of having bucked up against the impossible rears its dread front and mocks the man who dared to face the task of doing justice to the subject.

Once or twice a flowing beaker of moxie or nerve food, has been tossed off, and with grim determination the struggle made to sift the material on hand and condense it into something like a reasonable shape.

With a heartfelt sigh the colossal task has, however, been reluctantly abandoned. There are the eighty volumes each so crowded with thrills and he rt-tugs that it were madness to hope to do justice to them collectively and rank injustice to discriminate between them. The three larger pictures illustrating this article have been selected at random from eighty just as interesting, and the smaller ones are portraits of Deadwood Dick, his wife, Calamity Jane, and Deadwood Dick, Jr.

To abandon the idea of giving a few extracts from their lives causes infinite pain, but if once a start were made in that direction, it would be cruel to *The Evening Sun's* readers to stop, and it is therefore better not to relate one single adventure. Suffice it to say that the stories are clean and well written, and until the glut of gore and supernatural courage and success of the heroes becomes indigestible to the ordinary mind, there is much amusement to be found in adventures of the Deadwood Dicks.

The small boy and his larger brother have minds attuned by nature to absorb the music of the constant flow of villains' blood and the never-ceasing cracking of rifles and revolvers that keep the silence in a perpetual state of unrest throughout the Deadwood Dick series, but it is not so with a more mature mind, and unless you are a small boy or a youth prone to admire the terrifically heroic in literature, you are advised not to purchase the entire eighty volumes, but to try a sample here and there from the list. If you are a small boy, or the other fellow, you doubtless know more about it than the writer, and so don't want any advice on the subject.

As a parting tribute to Mr. Wheeler, the owner of the brain that has evolved and continues to evolve the most popular boys' stories of the day, it is but fair to add, and an interesting fact as well, that he has also found time to dash off some novels about Cloven Hoof, the Buffalo Demon; Bob Wolff, the Girl Dead-Shot; Death-Face, Detective; Old Avalanche; Wild Edna, the Girl Brigand; Jim Bludsoe, Jr., the Boy Phoenix; Buckhorn Bill; Gold Rifle, the Sharpshooter; Rosebud Rob; Nugget Ned; Idyl, the Girl Miner; Photograph Phil; Canada Chet; Watch-Eye; Jack Hoyle, the Young Speculator; Gilt-Edged Dick, the Sport Detective; Cinnamon Chip, the Girl Sport; Bonanza Bill; Boss Bob, the King of Bootblacks; Solid Sam, the Boy Road Agent; Captain Ferret, the New York Detective; New York Nell, the Boy-Girl Detective; Nobby Nick of Nevada; Wild Frank, the Buckskin Bravo; Fritz, the Bound Boy Detective; Snoczer, the Boy Sharp; Apollo Bill, the Trail Tornado; Cyclone Kit, the Young Gladiator; Sierra Sam, the Frontier Ferret; Jumbo Joe, the Boy Patrol; Denver Doll the Detective Queen; Turk, the Boy Ferret; A No. 1, the Dashing Toll-taker; Liza Jane, the Girl Miner; Kelly, Hickey & Co., the Detectives of Philadelphia; Little Quick Shot; Kangaroo Kit, the Mysterious Miner; Manhattan Mike, the Bowery Blood; First-class Fred; Yreka Jim, the Gold Gatherer; Nabob Ned; Cool Kit, the King of Kids; Bicycle Ben; Wrinkles, the Night Watch Detective; High Hat Harry, the Baseball Detective; Sam Slabsides, the Beggar Boy Detective; Jim Beak and Pal, Private Detectives; and Santa Fe Sal, the Slasher.

He may therefore be pronounced the Storyteller from Storytellingville, and the Deadwood Dick stories will be his towering monument.